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Report of the Secretary-General on the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 12 of Security Council resolution 2113 (2013), by which the Council requested me to report every 90 days on the implementation of the mandate of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID). The report includes an update on the situation in Darfur covering the period from 1 October to 31 December 2013. It also includes, in section VIII, an assessment of developments against the benchmarks and indicators contained in my report to the Council of 16 October 2012 (see S/2012/771, annex I).

II. Political developments

Implementation of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur

2. During the reporting period, the signatory parties to the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur, namely the Government of the Sudan, the Liberation and Justice Movement (LJM) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM)-Bashar, made limited progress towards its implementation.

3. In accordance with the provisions of the Doha Document on justice, on 22 October the Government issued a presidential decree granting amnesty to JEM-Bashar combatants. The amnesty applies to felonies other than war crimes, crimes against humanity, crimes of genocide, crimes of sexual violence or gross violations of human rights or humanitarian law.

4. With regard to the work of the Special Prosecutor for Darfur, a total of 66 cases are reportedly under investigation by his office. This reportedly includes newly opened investigations into the fatal attacks against UNAMID peacekeepers in El Geneina (Western Darfur) on 13 October and Kabkabiya (Northern Darfur) on 24 November (see paras. 35 and 36 below, respectively). Furthermore, the Government invited the African Union and the United Nations to deploy expert specialists to monitor the Special Court trials provided for in the Doha Document, to ensure that proceedings conform with international standards. UNAMID has commenced the process of identifying suitable experts and arranging for their deployment.

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5. On 20 November, the Government and LJM informed UNAMID that they had entered into a bilateral agreement on security arrangements outside and separate from the Doha Document. The agreement, which was reached without consultation with the Ceasefire Commission, provides for the integration of between 3,000 and 4,000 LJM combatants into the Sudanese Armed Forces and government police. The remaining combatants, the number of which has yet to be specified by the parties, are expected to undergo a disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process. UNAMID has urged the parties to adhere to the security arrangements set out in the Doha Document and is assessing the appropriateness of providing support under the new agreement. Regarding the implementation of the security arrangements for JEM-Bashar forces, UNAMID, in conjunction with the Sudan Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission, held a workshop on the security provisions of the Doha Document for the movement's commanders in Khartoum from 8 to 12 December. Its purpose was to increase their understanding of integration and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes in anticipation of implementing those aspects of the agreement.

6. With regard to the Darfur Development Strategy, commercial agreements between the Darfur Regional Authority and national implementing contractors for the implementation of 315 projects were signed in December. This followed the initiation of a public tendering process on 31 August 2013 for the implementation of 1,071 projects totalling 400 million Sudanese pounds ($82.5 million). The Darfur Regional Authority selected the projects in consultation with local authorities, the United Nations country team and other international partners. They involve the construction or rehabilitation of education, electricity, health-care and water services in 59 localities throughout Darfur. Contracts for the remainder of the projects will be established once the implementation of the first batch has progressed. The Darfur Reconstruction and Development Fund provided the funds from the tranche that it received from the federal Government in January 2013.

7. Moreover, and as agreed under the Doha Document, the Government took steps to increase the participation of Darfuris in the tertiary education system by announcing, on 15 November, the exemption of children of internally displaced persons and refugees from Darfur from paying tuition fees for five years at national universities and State-run higher education institutions.

8. The above-mentioned activities notwithstanding, progress towards the implementation of the majority of the provisions of the Doha Document continued to lag far behind the implementation timeline. This includes the provisions related to the establishment of a microfinance system and the compensation and reconciliation of customary and statutory land right claims, all of which stand to have a concrete impact on the lives of ordinary Darfuris.

9. On 16 December, the Implementation Follow-up Commission held its seventh meeting in El Fasher to review progress against the implementation of the Doha Document. Participants expressed concern about the slow rate of progress and delay by donors in fulfilling pledges made at a donor conference in April 2013. To date, none of the $1 billion pledged has been delivered. In addition, participants expressed concern about the adverse impact that heavy intercommunal fighting had on security and, in turn, on recovery, reconstruction and development efforts in Darfur. Moreover, they urged the Government and LJM to implement the security arrangements within the framework of the Ceasefire Commission.

Negotiations towards an inclusive peace agreement

10. The African Union and United Nations Joint Special Representative and Joint Chief Mediator for Darfur, Mohamed ibn Chambas, continued to engage with the parties to the conflict and countries in the region to promote negotiations over a cessation of hostilities agreement. Between 20 October and 25 November, he met with senior officials of the African Union, the Governments of Chad, Ethiopia and South Sudan and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) to encourage them to play a proactive and constructive role in the Darfur peace process. His interlocutors reaffirmed their support for the peaceful settlement of the Darfur conflict and pledged to urge the parties to come to the negotiating table to discuss a cessation of hostilities.

11. The Joint Chief Mediator, in collaboration with IGAD representatives, held a technical workshop on peace and security for representatives of the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA)-Minni Minawi and JEM-Jibril Ibrahim in Addis Ababa from 9 to 11 December. SLA-Abdul Wahid declined an invitation to attend. The objective of the workshop was to increase the movements' understanding of humanitarian ceasefires and to encourage them to enter into negotiations with the Government. The movements expressed readiness to negotiate, under the auspices of the Sudanese Revolutionary Front alliance, a temporary cessation of hostilities. In addition, they reiterated their commitment to providing unrestricted access to humanitarian and development workers to areas under their control. The Joint Chief Mediator briefed government officials and international partners on the outcomes of the workshop at the International Follow-Up Commission meeting in El Fasher. Further engagement with the parties on the possibility of negotiations over a cessation of hostilities is planned for early 2014.

Darfur-based dialogue

12. On 15 December, the facilitators of the Darfur-based internal dialogue and consultatic (the African Union Commission, the Government of Qatar and UNAMID) endorsed a concept note, communications strategy and road map for the initiative (see S/2013/607). UNAMID commenced a survey of 500 civil society representatives, on 28 November, to ascertain their level of understanding of the process, views on the enabling environment and assessment of what would be needed to ensure that it contributes effectively to the settlement of the conflict. The results of the survey, the completion of which is scheduled for early 2014, will inform the development of operational plans for the consultations.

III. Protection of civilians from physical violence

13. During the reporting period, intermittent clashes between government and armed movement forces, resource-based intercommunal fighting and widespread banditry continued to place civilians at serious risk of physical violence.

14. Fighting between government and armed movement forces escalated slightly, in particular in an arc of territory running from Mellit in Northern Darfur, through Tawilla (50 km west of El Fasher), to Khor Abeche in Southern Darfur. This followed the end of seasonal rains in late September. In Northern Darfur, on 5 October, government and SLA-Abdul Wahid forces clashed in Donki Shatta (25 km north-west of El Fasher, Northern Darfur). According to the authorities,

three Sudanese armed forces personnel were killed and one civilian was injured. The parties clashed again on 26 October at a Sudanese armed forces checkpoint near Mellit market (80 km north of El Fasher). Military officials informed UNAMID that three government soldiers had been killed and four injured in that incident. In addition, movement forces captured military equipment, including two gun-mounted vehicles.

15. According to the authorities and community sources, government and unidentified armed movement forces clashed in the vicinity of Thabit (45 km south-west of El Fasher) on 19 October. That engagement reportedly included air strikes by Sudanese armed forces aircraft. Access restrictions imposed by government security officials, who cited security concerns, prevented UNAMID from conducting a timely assessment of the impact on civilians. UNAMID protested against the restrictions. The following day, Sudanese armed forces aircraft carried out aerial strikes against armed movement elements near Khor Abeche, Southern Darfur, reportedly killing 10 civilians and injuring 6 others.

16. On 27 October, an unidentified armed group attacked a government military camp at Amar Jadeed village (20 km south of Menawashie, Southern Darfur). The attackers killed one government soldier, injured four others and seized two gun-mounted vehicles and a number of weapons. Reports from local sources, which could not be independently verified, attributed the attacks to LJM-Ali Karabino and LJM-Jibril Wafi, non-signatory factions that split from LJM in April 2011. Fighting continued on 31 October near Mershing (90 km north of Nyala), resulting in the death of three government police and injuries to two others. One civilian was also killed. UNAMID urged the parties to refrain from hostilities.

17. The sporadic clashes continued on 15 November, when armed movement elements attacked a commercial convoy under government security escort near Siwar (65 km south-west of El Daein), killing one Popular Defence Force soldier and injuring one civilian. The assailants took two commercial trucks. Government officials attributed the attack to SLA-Minni Minawi. On 24 November, following the carjacking of four commercial trucks by armed movement elements at Ghar Hajar (18 km north-east of Shaeria, Southern Darfur) earlier the same day, government and armed movement forces clashed in nearby Khazanjadeed. On 13 December, SLA-Abdul Wahid forces attacked a Sudanese armed forces camp near Abata (30 km north-east of Zalingei, Central Darfur), killing 10 armed forces personnel and injuring 18. The attackers captured two vehicles and several weapons. Sudanese armed forces aircraft dropped two bombs in the vicinity of Tura village (120 km west of El Fasher) on 29 December. On the same day, unidentified armed assailants attacked a Sudanese armed forces base in Disa (40 km north of Kutum).

18. A personal disagreement between two commanders triggered a clash between Sudanese armed forces and LJM elements in Menawashi market (Southern Darfur) on 21 November. Two LJM personnel, one armed forces soldier and two civilians were killed.

19. Government authorities acknowledged to UNAMID that, on 29 November, a Sudanese armed forces aircraft had fired on a convoy of civilian vehicles near Tangarara (approximately 25 km north-west of Shangil Tobaya, Northern Darfur), killing 10 internally displaced persons (including 2 women and 1 child) and injuring 2 others. The authorities stated that the aircraft was conducting surveillance for armed movement elements when it encountered the convoy, which had allegedly not

coordinated its movement with security officials. UNAMID assessed that an air-to-ground rocket hit the vehicle. UNAMID urged the Government to fully respect the protections afforded to civilians under international humanitarian law.

Intercommunal conflict

20. Resource-based conflict between communities, supported by tribal militias, remained a major source of insecurity and displacement for the civilian population, in particular in Central and Southern Darfur. The intensification of this dimension of the conflict, the trend towards which began in August 2012, is due to several factors. These include a deterioration in the economy of the Sudan in 2012 and 2013 that led to heightened competition between communities for resources, in particular access to arable land, as well as lucrative minerals and hydrocarbons (e.g. gold and oil). Another factor is the disruptions in salary payments to paramilitary forces, which increased their need for alternative sources of revenue and, at the same time, eroded the authorities' control over the forces. Moreover, the intensification has taken place within the context of pre-existing root causes that include impunity and weak rule of law, weak or absent State administrations in rural areas, the prevalence of arms and armed groups, weakened traditional conflict resolution mechanisms and limited opportunities for young people.

21. During the reporting period, fighting between groups from the Salamat and Misseriya tribes, which began in April 2013 over land and local political authority, continued despite the conclusion of a peace agreement between them on 3 July 2013. On 24 and 28 October, incidents of cattle rustling perpetrated by the Salamat against the Misseriya triggered renewed clashes between the tribes in Bindisi and Eberla (29 km west and 12 km north of Mukjar, Central Darfur, respectively). Government authorities reported a total of 24 people killed and 49 injured. In both instances, government security forces restored calm. UNAMID increased patrols in and around Mukjar to enhance the security of the local population. Fighting continued on 7 and 8 November, spilling over into Rehaid el Birdi locality in Southern Darfur through retaliatory attacks perpetrated by the Misseriya and Taisha against the Salamat in Kubum and Markondi (25 km from Rehaid el Birdi). This resulted in the displacement of approximately 18,000 civilians to various parts of Southern Darfur.

22. On 14 November, armed Salamat from Darfur, together with Salamat reinforcements from Chad, launched an attack on the Abuzar internally displaced persons camp, a predominantly Misseriya camp on the outskirts of Um Dukhun town. According to local sources, 50 people were killed and many others injured. In addition, 104 shelters and two community centres were burned. Joint Chad-Sudan border forces intervened to contain the situation. UNAMID transported the Central Darfur *Wali* and the State Security Committee to Um Dukhun on 17 November to mediate. While the situation remained tense, there were no further clashes. UNAMID observed the heavy presence of Sudanese armed forces and joint Chad-Sudan border forces stationed in and around Um Dukhun town. A search operation conducted by those forces in the Um Dukhun market area on 28 November seized 424 illegal firearms. Restrictions imposed by the authorities prevented peacekeepers from moving beyond Um Dukhun town to verify the reports of casualties and assess the impact of the clashes on the civilian population. UNAMID protested against the restrictions to State authorities.

23. Throughout October and November, UNAMID engaged Misseriya and Salamat leaders, as well as State and local authorities, to promote adherence to the 3 July peace agreement and urge government officials to restore peace and stability. Under the agreement, the parties had committed to ceasing hostilities, facilitating the return of people displaced by clashes and paying compensation for casualties of the fighting. To enhance security and prevent further clashes, additional government troops and police were deployed to the flashpoints of Um Dukhun, Bindisi and Mukjar; tribal militia camps throughout Um Dukhun locality were dismantled; and a State decree prohibiting the public display of weapons was issued.

24. The reconciliation agreements reached in July 2013 between groups from the Aballa and Beni Hussein tribes, who had clashed over control of an artisanal gold mine in Jebel Amir (Northern Darfur) earlier in the year, held throughout most of the reporting period. However, on 28 October a dispute over livestock grazing on farmland led to an isolated clash between the groups in which seven Abbala pastoralists were killed and one Beni Hussein farmer was injured. Similarly, on 1 November a group of Abbala attacked and killed a Beni Hussein and a Fur farmer who were tending their farms near the Sabarina gold mine (40 km south-east of El Sireaf, Northern Darfur). Another four Fur were killed the following day while attempting to collect the bodies of the two dead farmers. A joint committee of Fur, Beni Hussein and Abbala community leaders proceeded to the area to mediate. That intervention led to an agreement to refrain from further hostilities, respect each other's assets and adhere to pre-existing reconciliation agreements. Furthermore, the parties agreed that community leaders and militia commanders would work together to defuse intercommunal tensions, community members would be allowed to move freely to access markets in the three surrounding localities and community leaders would focus on preventing conflict between farmers and pastoralists. No further incidents were recorded.

25. On 8 October, clashes were reported between an armed militia group and internally displaced persons in North camp near Nertiti, Central Darfur, after the militia group kidnapped a local businessman who later died in captivity. His death triggered angry demonstrations in the camp and reportedly led to the death of a woman affiliated with the militia group. In reaction, the militia attacked the camp, killing one person and injuring six others, and looted camp residents' belongings. Government police intervened to mediate between the two sides. UNAMID called upon the leaders of the parties to urge restraint.

26. On 5 and 6 December, an attempt by a group from the Ma'alia tribe to demarcate land that the Hamar tribe claimed to own triggered fighting between them near Zarga Muhajid (135 km north-east of El Daein, Eastern Darfur), on the border with Western Kordofan. A total of 36 Ma'alia and 12 Hamar were killed, and several others on each side were injured. According to local sources, the disputed area is a potential location of oil fields. On 7 December, UNAMID engaged both the State Government and traditional community leaders in Eastern Darfur, urging the conflicting parties to cease hostilities. No further clashes were recorded.

27. The destruction of farms by pastoralists triggered clashes between them and farmers in the Jogana and Dougi areas (15 km south-east and 18 km south of Greida, Southern Darfur, respectively) on 7 November. Local authorities and government security personnel who proceeded to the area to mediate were themselves attacked by a group of pastoralists. This resulted in the death of one policeman and injuries

to eight others. Immediately thereafter, the Government deployed additional security forces to the area to restore calm. UNAMID increased patrolling around internally displaced person camps in Greida town to enhance the protection of civilians. There were no further reports of fighting.

28. In the light of the intensification of resource-based intercommunal fighting in Darfur, UNAMID continued with increased efforts to support community-level conflict resolution. During the reporting period, UNAMID facilitated conferences in El Fasher, El Geneina, Khartoum, Nyala and Zalingei for local authorities, community leaders and civil society representatives on the root causes of intercommunal conflict in Darfur. The purpose was to analyse the causes and drivers of this dimension of the conflict and develop recommendations to address it. Participants identified land disputes and poor natural resource management, the prevalence of weapons and the weakness of State institutions as key factors fuelling the violence. Recommendations included building the capacity of traditional reconciliation mechanisms and peace committees, providing traditional mediators with additional resources, increasing the involvement of women in reconciliation processes, establishing a mechanism to monitor potential breaches of local ceasefire or peace agreements and strengthening the rule of law. These recommendations were presented to the authorities, the Darfur Regional Authority and civil society organizations for consideration and implementation.

Banditry

29. Criminal violence perpetrated against government personnel, civilians and UNAMID by armed elements and gangs, typically to obtain vehicles and other resources, continued to pose a serious risk.

30. Between 1 October and 25 December, unidentified armed assailants attacked government security personnel and installations on six occasions, resulting in the capture of vehicles and military equipment. This included, on 17 October, a simultaneous attack by unidentified assailants on the headquarters of the Central Reserve Police and the government police in Saraf Omra, Northern Darfur. One government police officer was killed and another injured. One female civilian was also killed in the crossfire. The attackers escaped with four gun-mounted vehicles.

31. Civilians were also targeted in several serious criminal incidents. On 14 October, in the Al Tadamon area in Nyala, three unidentified armed men attempted to rob a local Zaghawa businessman. The victim and one perpetrator were killed in the incident. Government police arrested one of the perpetrators, while the others fled the scene. On 28 October, unidentified gunmen carjacked a vehicle belonging to the Southern Darfur State Ministry of Health at Gambid (30 km north-west of Nyala) on the road between Nyala and Kass. The vehicle's occupants, which included a doctor, a medic and two government police, were abducted. The reason for their abduction is unknown. As at 31 December, they were still being held. On 25 November, unidentified assailants attacked a Western Darfur State Ministry of Health measles vaccination team in Gokar (25 km south of El Geniena, Western Darfur). Two Ministry staff members were killed in that incident. On 2 December, unidentified armed assailants wearing civilian clothing carjacked a vehicle from a State Ministry of Health measles vaccination team as it passed through Adbul Shakor village (30 km north-west of Kutum). No casualties were reported.

IV. Security situation and freedom of movement

32. Between 1 October and 31 December, UNAMID movements over land were restricted on 35 occasions, compared with 37 in the previous reporting period. The authorities intermittently restricted access to rural areas around Khor Abeche and Shaeria, Southern Darfur, in particular in late November in connection with the suspected presence of SLA-Minni Minawi elements. Government authorities denied 501 of 4,637 flight requests, compared with 826 of 4,734 requests in the previous period. The restrictions tended to be imposed by government security officials on movements in areas of ongoing or recently concluded hostilities between government and armed movement forces. UNAMID called upon the authorities to allow its personnel unhindered freedom of movement throughout Darfur to enable the effective implementation of its mandate.

33. Access restrictions imposed by the authorities also remained a challenge for humanitarian actors. The East Jebel Marra area remained fully inaccessible during the reporting period. In Eastern Darfur, restrictions in place since August continued to prevent United Nations humanitarian agencies from assisting civilians displaced to the Adilla and Abu Karinka localities by intercommunal clashes. A planned inter-agency mission to the area was approved by the Humanitarian Aid Commission and the National Intelligence and Security Service but denied clearance by Military Intelligence on security grounds.

Safety and security

34. Threats to the safety and security of UNAMID and humanitarian personnel due in particular to armed attacks, carjackings and robberies remained of serious concern. UNAMID peacekeepers came under attack on seven occasions, four of which resulted in a total of seven fatalities. This brings to 16 the total number of peacekeepers killed in hostilities in Darfur in 2013 and to 57 the number killed since UNAMID was deployed in 2008.

35. On 11 October, two unidentified assailants stabbed a UNAMID peacekeeper from Zambia in El Fasher when he resisted a carjacking. The peacekeeper later succumbed to his injuries. Two days later, on 13 October, approximately four unidentified armed assailants attacked the last vehicle in a UNAMID patrol consisting of 12 peacekeepers in El Geneina, Western Darfur. Three of the peacekeepers, from Senegal, were killed and one was injured. While the assailants escaped with a vehicle and military equipment, the vehicle was later recovered. The findings of an investigation reportedly opened by the Special Prosecutor for Darfur have not been made available to UNAMID.

36. On 24 November, approximately six unidentified armed assailants attacked a UNAMID vehicle on a logistics patrol near Kabkabiya, Northern Darfur. One peacekeeper from Rwanda was killed. The assailants fled with the vehicle. Government police informed UNAMID that they were investigating the incident. On 29 December, six unidentified armed assailants wearing military dress attacked a UNAMID convoy near Greida, Southern Darfur, killing one Jordanian and one Senegalese police officer. UNAMID peacekeepers repelled the attackers by returning fire, killing one, whose body was taken into government police custody. Government police arrested another near the scene and took him into custody. An attempted carjacking is the suspected motive.

37. A local resident stabbed a UNAMID peacekeeper on sentry duty in Ed al Fursan (Southern Darfur) on 5 October, while attempting to steal his weapon. The peacekeeper suffered minor injuries. The perpetrator was arrested and handed over to local authorities for prosecution. He was later released on bail pending trial. On 2 November, a UNAMID peacekeeper suffered minor injuries when he resisted attempts by two unidentified armed men to carjack the vehicle he was driving in El Daein, Eastern Darfur. The following day, four unidentified armed assailants attacked a UNAMID patrol in Kutum, Northern Darfur, in an attempt to carjack a vehicle. The peacekeepers repelled the attackers by returning fire. There were no casualties.

38. On 20 November, a Sudanese armed forces attack helicopter flew at low altitude over a UNAMID convoy conducting a routine patrol from Kass to Nyala, Southern Darfur. UNAMID protested against the status-of-forces agreement violation with senior government officials.

39. A total of seven carjacking incidents targeting vehicles of UNAMID and humanitarian actors occurred during the reporting period, compared with 12 in the previous period. There were 12 incidents involving house break-ins and robberies targeting UNAMID and humanitarian personnel, compared with 16 in the previous reporting period. Of those, cash and equipment were stolen from international non-governmental organizations in Khor Abeche (Southern Darfur), Kutum (Northern Darfur) and Zalingei (Central Darfur).

40. On 20 November, a rations provider contracted by UNAMID informed the Mission that it had recovered the helicopter detained by SLA-Minni Minawi forces 50 km south of Nyala on 3 August, after it had made an emergency landing. Reportedly, a bullet hole in the rotor blade caused the emergency.

41. Insecurity and attacks on humanitarian actors continued to pose significant challenges to the effective delivery of humanitarian assistance. On 23 October, unidentified gunmen killed the director of a national aid organization during a carjacking incident in Sakali village (15 km south-west of Nyala). One other staff member and a police officer were also injured in the attack.

42. Unidentified armed men stole food and personal effects from World Food Programme trucks delivering aid to Um Dukhun, Central Darfur, on 13 October. The drivers were unharmed and the trucks were not taken. On 7 November, unidentified armed assailants carjacked a World Food Programme truck slightly south of Kutum, Northern Darfur, as it returned from food distribution. A UNAMID patrol dispatched to search for the vehicle located and pursued it. After an exchange of fire with the occupants, the peacekeepers recovered the vehicle 15 km north-west of Kutum. The perpetrators escaped; there were no casualties. On 15 November, central reserve police manning a checkpoint near El Fasher shot and injured the driver of a World Food Programme-contracted truck in what remain unclear circumstances. The driver sustained moderately serious injuries.

43. In a positive development, Sudanese armed forces authorities agreed early in November to provide security at landing sites in Kulbus and Selea in Western Darfur, thereby enabling the resumption of United Nations Humanitarian Air Service flights to those locations. The flights were suspended in September after the UNAMID base in Kulbus was closed in line with the force reconfiguration recommended in the

review of uniformed personnel. An estimated 20,000 people benefit from education, health, livelihood, water and sanitation assistance in the area.

V. Humanitarian situation

44. During the reporting period, the population forum working group revised downward, from 460,000 to 380,000, its estimate of the number of civilians displaced by conflict in the first three quarters of 2013. The adjustment is based on an updated assessment of the number of people displaced by intercommunal fighting between the Southern Rezeigat and Ma'aliya in Eastern Darfur in August 2013. The total figure excludes 20,100 civilians newly displaced by fighting during the reporting period, as this estimate is pending verification by protection agencies through site visits. The working group, which includes government authorities, non-governmental organizations, United Nations agencies and UNAMID, meets periodically to establish a consensus on displacement figures.

45. An inter-agency humanitarian assessment mission to Muhajeria and Labado, Eastern Darfur, early in November found that a significant portion of the 60,000 civilians displaced by fighting between the Sudanese armed forces and SLA-Minni Minnawi in that area in April had yet to return home. Following the assessment, the provision of health-care assistance to approximately 9,890 civilians still gathered near the UNAMID base in Labado was transferred from UNAMID to the Sudanese Red Crescent. In addition, the Government's Water, Environment and Sanitation Department began the construction of 300 latrines and sent technicians to repair 18 hand pumps.

46. Approximately 10,000 of the 100,000 civilians displaced by resource-based intercommunal fighting in and around Jebel Amir, Northern Darfur, early in 2013 have reportedly resettled in 18 "cluster villages" near El Sireaf designated by the Government as return sites. Access restrictions and insecurity have prevented humanitarian protection actors from visiting the sites. International and national non-governmental organizations continued to provide humanitarian assistance, including health care, to some 80,000 displaced persons in other areas around El Sireaf.

47. On 4 December, the World Health Organization and the Northern Darfur State Ministry of Health reported that, following the discovery of an outbreak of whooping cough early in October, the total number of suspected cases in El Sireaf locality had reached 96. On the same day, the agencies sent samples through a UNAMID flight to Khartoum for examination. The agencies continued to monitor the situation and developed plans for a vaccination campaign, the implementation of which is pending the laboratory test results.

VI. Rule of law, governance and human rights

48. The overall number of documented human rights violations increased from 87 incidents involving 189 victims in the previous reporting period to 156 incidents involving 314 victims in the current period (164 victims of violations of the right to physical integrity, 77 victims of violations of the right to life, 63 victims of sexual and gender-based violence and 10 victims of arbitrary arrest and illegal detention).

49. National Intelligence and Security Service or Military Intelligence perpetrated all nine cases of arbitrary arrest and illegal detention. None of the victims were charged with offences. In one incident, a prominent lawyer and member of the Darfur Bar Association, who had been arrested on 26 September in Nyala and then transferred to Khartoum, was held without charges for 32 days. He was released on 28 October.

50. Concerning violations of the right to life, UNAMID recorded 41 cases involving 77 victims, compared with 17 cases involving 19 victims in the previous reporting period. In 13 cases, the perpetrators were identified as belonging to the Central Reserve Police, the government regular police, the Sudanese armed forces, SLA-Minni Minawi or LJM. In the other cases, the victims were unable to identify the affiliation of the perpetrators.

51. The number of violations of the right to physical integrity, including abductions, recorded by UNAMID increased slightly from 42 incidents involving 113 victims in the preceding reporting period to 71 cases involving 164 victims in the current period. In 17 incidents, the perpetrators were identified as belonging to the Central Reserve Police, the Sudanese armed forces, JEM-Bashar or SLA-Minni Minawi. In the remainder, the victims were unable to identify the perpetrators' affiliation. UNAMID urged the authorities to investigate and bring to justice those responsible for the violations.

52. UNAMID recorded 35 cases involving 63 victims of sexual and gender-based violence during the reporting period, compared with 24 incidents involving 31 victims in the previous period. Of the 35 cases recorded, 28 involving 51 victims were rape, while 7 involving 12 victims were attempted rape. A total of 16 cases involved minors. The victims were attacked on farms, while running errands or during firewood or water collection. Underreporting of sexual and gender-based violence remained a challenge owing to social stigma and the lack of confidence in government authorities to investigate and prosecute the perpetrators of such crimes.

53. While victims filed complaints with government police in connection with 15 cases, investigations were opened into only 4 of them. The police cited the victims' inability in eight other cases to identify the suspects as prohibitive to conducting investigations. The alleged perpetrators in the cases under investigation were arrested and detained, two of whom were civilians and one was a member of the Central Reserve Police accused of raping a 6-year-old girl in El Fasher on 18 October. The Family and Child Protection Unit of the government police interrogated the suspects and collected samples for forensic examination in Khartoum. Separately, government police informed UNAMID that a 32-year-old man accused of sexually abusing a 7-year-old boy in Nyala on 1 November was found guilty and sentenced to five years' imprisonment. The suspect has appealed the sentence.

54. UNAMID continued efforts to increase the protection of women's rights. On 31 October, it provided technical support to the Federal Political Parties Commission in support of a workshop on women's participation in constitution-making processes for 75 political party representatives in Khartoum. Between 21 October and 13 November, UNAMID, in collaboration with Northern Darfur State authorities, organized three workshops for a total of 145 traditional community leaders to promote the increased representation of women in traditional administrations. On 30 and 31 October, it facilitated a workshop on legal and policy

reforms for 50 women in El Geneina, Western Darfur, to enhance their participation in the judicial system. On 18 and 19 November, UNAMID, in collaboration with the Northern Darfur Ministry of Social Affairs, delivered training on sexual and gender-based violence prevention to local authorities in Kabkabiya.

55. In addition, UNAMID continued its efforts to promote human rights more generally. On 2 and 3 October, it conducted a workshop on displaced persons' rights for 27 internally displaced persons in El Geneina. It held a workshop on human rights for 29 Ministry of Education officials, including 6 women, in El Fasher from 12 to 14 November. That event was part of a programme to incorporate human rights education in the teacher training curriculum. To promote increased access to justice, on 17 and 18 December UNAMID held a workshop on the right to a fair trial for 50 internally displaced persons in Zalingei.

56. UNAMID continued to work with prison officials to strengthen the corrections system. From 11 November to 10 December, the Mission, in collaboration with the government prisons administration, the University of El Fasher and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), organized a training programme for 30 prison staff across Darfur. Its purpose was to strengthen the capacity of staff to reform and rehabilitate prisoners. On 25 November, UNAMID conducted refresher courses on investigations and the treatment of detainees for prison officials from 11 detention centres throughout Darfur. On 2 December, UNAMID, UNDP and 50 government representatives participated in a workshop in Khartoum at which a five-year Darfur prison strategic plan for 2014 to 2018 was adopted. That plan sets out a framework for the provision of support for prison rehabilitation, capacity-building of prison officials and vocational training of prisoners. During the reporting period, UNAMID conducted capacity-building workshops for a total of 5,678 government police on community policing, crime management, gender issues and child protection.

57. To promote the protection of children, UNAMID maintained ongoing dialogue about ending the recruitment and use of child soldiers with members of the Sudanese armed forces, armed movements and militias. In addition, it conducted 20 training sessions on children's rights for a total of 599 community members and government personnel.

VII. Mission deployment and operations

58. As at 27 December 2013, the strength of UNAMID civilian personnel stood at 93 per cent of the approved strength of 4,369 (2,920 national staff, 1,032 international staff and 417 United Nations Volunteers).

59. The strength of UNAMID military personnel stood at 14,779 (14,102 troops, 353 staff officers, 237 military observers and 87 liaison officers), representing 91 per cent of the authorized strength of 16,200.

60. The number of UNAMID individual police officers stood at 2,303 (comprising 83 per cent men and 17 per cent women), representing 99 per cent of the authorized strength of 2,310. All of the authorized 17 formed police units have been deployed.

61. During the reporting period, UNAMID military personnel conducted 9,806 patrols, including 5,478 routine patrols, 2,070 night patrols, 733 administrative patrols, 638 humanitarian escorts, 624 short-range patrols and 263 long-range

patrols. UNAMID police personnel conducted a total of 11,263 patrols, including 6,112 inside camps for internally displaced persons and 3,361 in villages, towns and markets, 1,205 medium-range patrols, 409 firewood and farm patrols and 176 long-range patrols.

62. From 1 October to 27 December, government authorities issued 1,337 new entry visas for UNAMID personnel. As at 27 December, 117 visas were pending, of which 47 were for United Nations Volunteers, 37 for civilian personnel, 13 for official visitors, 12 for contractors, 6 for military personnel and 2 for consultants. UNAMID continued to urge the authorities to approve all visa requests promptly, including those of United Nations Volunteers with specialist expertise not readily available in the local labour market.

63. The implementation of the recommendations of the review of UNAMID uniformed personnel reconfiguring the military and police components continued. The repatriation of 12 of 13 military units has been completed. The repatriation of the remaining unit, a light field engineering company from the United Republic of Tanzania, commenced in the last few days of December.

64. Regarding the operational and self-sustainment capabilities of troop and police contingents, 29 of the 44 military and police units currently deployed to UNAMID have a major equipment serviceability rate below the 90 per cent threshold. This figure is unchanged from my previous report. Furthermore, the equipment serviceability of several units has declined so that five are now at or below 44 per cent. In the area of self-sustainment capabilities, only 5 out of 44 units fully meet the requirements stipulated in the relevant memorandums of understanding. The remainder lack self-sustainment capabilities in various areas and are partially supported by UNAMID. The shortfalls, which pertain mainly to the serviceability of armoured personnel carriers, continue to undermine the effectiveness of UNAMID. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations continued to engage with troop- and police-contributing countries to encourage them to swiftly address shortcomings in the serviceability of contingent-owned equipment.

65. During the reporting period, a total of 22 quick-impact projects were completed; 56 additional projects are ongoing and at various stages of completion. A total of 67 new projects were approved for implementation.

66. UNAMID, in collaboration with local implementing partners, continued to carry out community-based labour-intensive projects for youth assessed as at risk of joining armed groups or gangs. A total of 15 projects were completed and handed over to communities in various parts of Darfur. On 8 December, UNAMID finalized 26 new project proposals.

67. UNAMID, in collaboration with the United Nations Mine Action Service, continued to reduce the threat posed to civilians by explosive hazards. During the reporting period, the Mission assessed 1,473 km of routes, surveyed 76 villages, covering 198 km^2, as free of unexploded ordnance, and destroyed 53 items of unexploded ordnance and 165 small arms ammunitions. In addition, UNAMID and local partners delivered risk education to 4,662 civilians (49 per cent women and 45 per cent children). UNAMID also provided support to government police in the rehabilitation of weapons storage facilities in El Fasher.

68. Pursuant to resolution 2113 (2013), the Secretariat, working in close consultation with the African Union Commission, UNAMID and the United Nations

country team, continued with the detailed and forward-looking review of the Mission requested by the Security Council. The review consists of three phases, the first of which involved an updated conflict analysis that identified its causes and drivers in the light of pre-existing and new dynamics. In the second phase, a mission capability analysis was carried out to assess, taking into account the operating environment in Darfur, UNAMID capacity to address the key causes, drivers and effects of the conflict identified in the updated conflict analysis. The third phase involved an African Union and United Nations Headquarters review assessment mission to Darfur from 1 to 10 December to validate the analysis' findings and develop options and recommendations for improving the effectiveness of UNAMID. Consultations with senior African Union officials and discussions with the Government of the Sudan on the findings, which incorporate the recommendations of the civilian staffing review requested by the General Assembly in its resolution 66/264, are planned for the margins of the African Union Summit to be held from 24 to 31 January 2014. The results of the review will be presented to the African Union Peace and Security Council and the United Nations Security Council in February 2014.

VIII. Progress against benchmarks

69. The present section contains an assessment of progress made against the benchmarks and indicators set out in annex I to my report dated 16 October 2012 (S/2012/771).

70. Progress against the first benchmark, increasing the inclusiveness of the political process, was limited. The implementation by the Government and LJM of the Doha Document was well behind agreed timelines. Preparations for the implementation of development projects under the Darfur Development Strategy were advanced, but actual construction had yet to begin. Two and a half years after the implementation of the Doha Document began, and despite its provisions offering many potential benefits, the agreement has yet to have a tangible impact on the lives of the general population. Nine months after the signing of an agreement between the Government and JEM-Bashar on 6 April to adopt the Doha Document, the only step taken towards its implementation thus far has been the granting of amnesty to JEM-Bashar combatants. While the participation of JEM-Jibril and SLA-Minni Minawi in a technical workshop on humanitarian ceasefires was encouraging, the continued insistence of the movements and the Government on contrary preconditions related to the scope of peace talks prevented a breakthrough in this area.

71. The second benchmark relates to the restoration of a stable and secure environment throughout Darfur. Clashes between government and armed movement forces undermined security in parts of Northern, Southern and Eastern Darfur, in particular along roads and in rural areas in Mellit, El Fasher, Tawilla, East Jebel Marra, Marshang, Niteaga and Shaeria localities. Heavy resource-based intercommunal fighting near the border between Central and Southern Darfur undermined stability in that area for much of October and November. Efforts by the State authorities and community leaders, supported by UNAMID, to peacefully resolve the conflict led to a subsiding in hostilities. In addition, reconciliation agreements reached in the previous reporting period largely held. Banditry threatened security in rural areas and along roads. Security incidents in camps and

main towns, where UNAMID presence and patrolling are mainly concentrated, were less frequent.

72. The third benchmark relates to strengthening the rule of law, governance and the protection of human rights. Discussions between UNAMID and the Ministry of Justice about the deployment of African Union and United Nations specialists to monitor Special Court trials are, if they lead to more transparent and fairer court proceedings, a potentially positive development with regard to strengthening accountability and the rule of law. Access to justice and the rule of law remained otherwise unchanged. The human rights situation, too, remained relatively unchanged during the reporting period. UNAMID continued to train government authorities, the Darfur Regional Authority and community leaders in order to promote greater understanding of human rights and justice principles.

73. The fourth benchmark pertains to stabilizing the humanitarian situation, facilitating the delivery of aid and supporting early recovery. Intercommunal fighting, which displaced an additional 20,100 civilians during the reporting period, increased the need for humanitarian assistance in conflict-affected areas, yet also hindered the delivery of assistance owing to insecurity and access restrictions. Humanitarian actors continued to provide assistance to approximately 110,000 civilians who remain displaced by intercommunal clashes that took place in Northern and Eastern Darfur in the previous reporting period. A temporary disruption in the supply of assistance to some 20,000 civilians in Western Darfur ended after humanitarian actors reached an agreement with the Government whereby the latter would provide security at helicopter landing zones. Overall, progress against this benchmark remained limited.

IX. Financial aspects

74. The General Assembly, in its resolution 67/284, appropriated the amount of $1,335.2 million for the maintenance of the Operation for the period from 1 July 2013 to 30 June 2014.

75. As at 30 December 2013, unpaid assessed contributions to the UNAMID Special Account amounted to $286.9 million. The total outstanding assessed contributions for all peacekeeping operations as at the same date amounted to $2,395.4 million.

76. As at 30 December 2013, reimbursement to troop-contributing countries for contingent-owned equipment and troop costs had been made for the period up to 30 September 2013 and 31 October 2013, respectively, in accordance with the quarterly payment schedule.

X. Observations

77. In my previous report (S/2013/607), I noted that progress by the signatory parties to the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur, the Government of the Sudan and the Liberation and Justice Movement, towards its implementation had been limited in terms of its impact on the ground. Unfortunately, this has remained the case over the past three months, with the progress made limited mainly to planning and administration, as opposed to action that directly benefited the general population.

Similarly, nine months after the adoption of the Doha Document, implementation by the Government and the other signatory armed movement, JEM-Bashar, has remained slow and limited to providing amnesty to the movement's members, as opposed to measures that provide relief to the civilian population.

78. The pace of implementation of the Doha Document will need to be increased if it is to effectively address the root causes of the conflict and promote stability, as well as attract the support of other movements and the general population. More emphasis is also needed on activities that bring about tangible benefits to ordinary Darfuris. In this connection, I once again call upon the signatory parties to accelerate the implementation of all outstanding provisions of the agreement. This will require demonstrating greater political will and increasing the commitment of resources.

79. Progress towards addressing the causes of the conflict also requires an enabling environment in which such efforts can be undertaken safely and sustainably. Sporadic clashes between government and armed movement forces and outbreaks of resource-based intercommunal conflict continued to seriously undermine security. They also placed civilians at risk of physical violence, displaced an estimated 20,000 people and increased humanitarian assistance needs. The spate of armed attacks by non-signatory movements and militias on government premises, during which vehicles and military equipment were captured, and on civilians travelling between towns in off-road vehicles also seriously undermined stability. I am concerned that, unless this trend is arrested and the rule of law respected and upheld, the security situation in Darfur is at risk of degenerating into an increasingly chaotic situation.

80. The engagement by the Joint Chief Mediator, Mohamed ibn Chambas, of JEM-Jibril Ibrahim, SLA-Minni Minawi and the Government of the Sudan in talks about a humanitarian cessation of hostilities is welcome. An agreement between these parties to cease fighting would have a considerable impact on the security situation. I urge the parties to come together without preconditions or delay to negotiate a cessation of hostilities agreement. I commend the Joint Chief Mediator for the steps taken to encourage countries in the region to play a proactive and constructive role in the Darfur peace process and support his efforts in this regard.

81. Efforts to address the intensification of intercommunal fighting are also needed to improve security and reduce threats to civilians. I welcome the high priority that UNAMID is placing on addressing this dimension of the conflict through, inter alia, the provision of logistical and technical support to government authorities and traditional community leaders engaged in reconciliation efforts. The steps taken by the Sudanese armed forces and the joint Chad-Sudan border forces to prevent intercommunal fighting in Central Darfur are also positive. Ultimately, for local reconciliation efforts to be sustained, they must be supported by measures that address the underlying causes of conflict, in particular as they relate to land and natural resource management, impunity for crimes and the prevalence of arms. The workshops organized by UNAMID on land and peaceful coexistence for local authorities, traditional community leaders and civil society representatives are a positive initiative in this regard.

82. The safety and security environment in which UNAMID and humanitarian personnel work remains very worrying. I condemn in the strongest terms those responsible for attacks on UNAMID personnel, in particular the four fatal attacks

that tragically claimed the lives of seven peacekeepers. I call once again upon the Government of the Sudan to swiftly investigate and bring those responsible to justice. In particular, I expect the Government to act expeditiously in relation to the incident of 29 December, in which one of the perpetrators, who was injured by return fire from UNAMID peacekeepers, was arrested at the scene. I would like to express my sincere condolences to the Governments of Jordan, Rwanda, Senegal and Zambia, as well as to the families, friends and colleagues of the fallen peacekeepers.

83. The rate at which the authorities approved new visa requests for UNAMID personnel during this reporting period is very welcome. I encourage the authorities to continue with this trend. The access restrictions imposed on UNAMID personnel by government security officials, however, constrained the ability of UNAMID to effectively implement its mandate, in particular with regard to the protection of civilians. I strongly urge the Government to adhere to the terms of the status-of-forces agreement and allow UNAMID personnel unimpeded freedom of movement throughout Darfur.

84. In conclusion, I would like to thank the Joint Special Representative and Joint Chief Mediator, Mohamed ibn Chambas, and all the women and men of UNAMID who continue to work tirelessly to protect civilians and promote peace. I would also like to express my sincere appreciation to all humanitarian aid workers for their determined efforts to assist and improve the lives of people in need in what are often very challenging conditions in Darfur.

United Nations S/2014/27

Security Council

Distr.: General
16 January 2014

Original: English

Letter dated 15 January 2014 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Uganda to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit to you a letter from the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs in charge of International Affairs of the Republic of Uganda, Okello Henry Oryem, in response to the recent report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo that has been leaked (see annex).

I will be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) John L. **Mugerwa**
Counsellor
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

14-00040 (E) 170114

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Annex to the letter dated 15 January 2014 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Uganda to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I write to you in response to the report authored by the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo that has been leaked. The leaked report contains baseless and fabricated allegations against my Government.

From 16 to 18 September 2013, the Group of Experts visited Uganda. Ready and willing to cooperate with the Group, the Government of Uganda went to great lengths to prepare for the visit. It arranged for the Group to meet and engage with a broad range of stakeholders. Field visits were organized and various pieces of information requested were provided.

However, the leaked report by the Group clearly demonstrates that the efforts made and information shared with it were disregarded. The report contains an old narrative making baseless and false allegations, circuitously questioning the credibility of information given to the Group by my Government. I will cite some examples.

On the Mouvement du 23 mars (M23), for example, in addition to the information provided to the Group, arrangements were made for the Group to meet and interview M23 combatants and also visit Luzira Government Prison to meet and interview interned M23 recruiters. Information was provided to the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Group of Experts when M23 combatants fled to Uganda in November 2013. The Expanded Joint Verification Mechanism, of which the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is a member, was also invited to verify their presence. However, the Group disregarded all this and instead chose to draw its conclusion from other sources. I must also add that the M23 combatants have been moved further away from the border area so that they do not constitute a threat to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We expect that, with the conclusion of the Kampala talks, modalities will be finalized quickly to resolve the issue of these M23 combatants.

On the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), substantial information was shared with the Group on the terrorist activities of ADF. The report underrates ADF terrorist links with Al-Qaida and its threat to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda. It does not give a full and true picture of the threat posed by ADF. It ironically draws no "conclusions", as it does elsewhere in the report for a group responsible for the rape and murder of over 20 people in Beni, eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, as recently as December 2013.

On natural resources, information provided on the efforts undertaken by Uganda to curb smuggling, promote awareness and regulate the sector to facilitate the implementation of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region regional traceability mechanism was ignored. The Group also ignored information shared with it in relation to the closure of the border at Bunagana, where restrictions put by the Government still apply, as the Uganda side of the border is still closed. The Group was provided with information regarding ivory seizures at the time of its visit and information on national and regional efforts undertaken to curb all trade in ivory. This was ignored.

It is important to emphasize that the Group was not only provided with information during and after its visit, but it was fully aware of the readiness of Uganda to engage with it through the relevant focal points in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Permanent Mission in New York. Regrettably, the Group did not share this information and it is not the first time this has happened. In its report of July 2013, while the Group annexed the letter written by the Prime Minister of Uganda dated 23 October 2012, it did not annex his letter of 12 November 2012, which contained the detailed response of the Government of Uganda to the specific allegations contained in the Group's final report of November 2012. This is an important record that should be put right.

It is difficult to understand why the Group came up with falsehoods and misconceived conclusions against Uganda in this way. The recommendations related to Uganda in the report are pointless and should be ignored. The report clearly fails to acknowledge political realities on the ground, including the unwavering efforts of Uganda in pursuit of peace, stability and security in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Finally, the work by the Group of Experts is lacking in objectivity, impartiality and transparency. The Group's work method even denies Uganda a right of reply. We question its motives and the reasons for the constant leaks of the Group's report. The report in our view is obstructive in the ongoing efforts of the region, the Security Council and the wider international community in bringing peace and stability to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I hope that this experience, which is not the first, will provide lessons for the Security Council and its sanctions committees on the working methods of the Group of Experts.

I would be grateful if this letter could be circulated to the members of the Security Council at the earliest opportunity so that it can inform the members of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo, who will be discussing the report.

(*Signed*) Okello Henry **Oryem**
Minister of State for Foreign Affairs
International Affairs

United Nations S/2014/28

Security Council

Distr.: General
16 January 2014

Original: English

Identical letters dated 16 January 2014 from the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

Last night, terrorists from the Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip fired a barrage of rockets towards the 113,000 citizens of the southern Israeli city of Ashkelon. One can only imagine the tragedy that would have ensued if the rockets had not been intercepted by the Iron Dome anti-missile system. Israel holds the Hamas terrorist organization responsible for these attacks.

Just two days ago, I sent a letter to the Security Council (S/2014/23) regarding the ongoing attacks. While rockets continue to fall on Israel's towns and cities, the Council has fallen silent and has failed to condemn Hamas for mercilessly targeting civilians. Israel has thus far shown considerable restraint, but it will not allow its citizens to be the ongoing victims of attacks and will continue to take all necessary measures to protect its population.

I urge you to unequivocally denounce these attacks in a public statement on behalf of the Security Council. I should be grateful if you would have the present letter distributed as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Ron **Prosor**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

14-20823 (E) 170114

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United Nations S/2014/29

Security Council

Distr.: General
16 January 2014

Original: English

Letter dated 16 January 2014 from the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to write to you in reference to document S/2014/10 dated 2 January 2014 concerning matters of which the Security Council is seized and the stage reached in their consideration. In this connection, on instruction from my Government, I have the honour to inform you that the Syrian Arab Republic requests the retention of the following items listed in paragraph 3 of the above-mentioned document:

52. The Palestine question (9 December 1947; 25 November 1966).

61. Arrangements for the proposed Peace Conference on the Middle East (15 December 1973; 15 December 1973).

62. The Middle East problem, including the Palestinian question (12 January 1976; 11 October 1985).

63. The situation in the occupied Arab territories (4 May 1976; 13 July 1998).

64. The question of the exercise by the Palestinian people of its inalienable rights (9 June 1976; 30 April 1980).

67. Letter dated 4 February 1986 from the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/17787) (4 February 1986; 6 February 1986).

68. Letter dated 15 April 1986 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/17993) (15 April 1986; 24 April 1986).

74. Letter dated 5 October 2003 from the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2003/939) (5 October 2003; 5 October 2003).

I take this opportunity to reaffirm the position of the Syrian Arab Republic set out in its note dated 9 February 1998 (S/1998/111) addressed to the President of the Security Council.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Bashar **Ja'afari**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

14-20830 (E) 170114

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United Nations S/2014/30

Security Council

Distr.: General
17 January 2014

Original: English

Letter dated 14 January 2014 from the Permanent Representative of Jordan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit to you the concept paper for the Security Council briefing to be held on the theme "War, its lessons and the search for a permanent peace" on 29 January 2014 (see annex).

I should be grateful if the present letter and its annex would be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Zeid Ra'ad Zeid **Al-Hussein**
Permanent Representative

14-20941 (E) 220114

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Annex to the letter dated 14 January 2014 from the Permanent Representative of Jordan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Concept note

War, its lessons and the search for a permanent peace

At the close of the Second World War, and almost 70 years ago, the United Nations was established principally to prevent yet another "world" war from occurring.[1] In practice, however it has also led humanity's march "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war";[2] "war" in this context refers to war in general, including civil wars, which may often appear to be entirely internal in their construction, but which invariably have causes, or consequences, that are transboundary and can therefore impact on international peace and security.

Over the past 69 years, the Security Council has mandated tasks for United Nations personnel ranging from observing truces and separating warring parties to deepening institutional involvement; for example, assisting post-conflict States in the drafting of their new constitutions, or training personnel, from police to air traffic controllers. This is well known. Yet, most of what the United Nations has achieved in maintaining international peace and security has been mainly physical: the separation of warring parties; mediation between them; the training of police personnel; and the provision of assistance in rebuilding destroyed infrastructure, among other achievements.

What the United Nations has not understood well enough is how it can help forge a deeper reconciliation among ex-combatants and their peoples based on an agreed or shared narrative, a shared memory, of a troubled past. This is especially relevant to sectarian, or ethnic, conflicts, as well as wars driven by extreme nationalism or ideologies. Even though the United Nations has, on occasion, assisted in setting up important truth commissions, its overall emphasis still tends towards quick-impact projects, pilot projects, and early and rapid economic development, in the belief that reconciliation will somehow take care of itself. It may well happen, or it may not. Even if it does happen, without a deeper analytical calculus underpinning it, reconciliation can easily remain superficial, vulnerable to any misguided individual with charisma and leadership skills able to exploit and abuse lingering historical grievances for political ends in a way that revives historical hatreds to create new challenges to international peace and security.

The thematic debate proposed by Jordan, as president of the Security Council for January 2014, is intended to enable the Council to draw lessons from the understanding of war and about what is necessary to achieve a permanent peace. The Jordanian presidency believes there is value in "reverse engineering" war analytically to arrive at conclusions concerning its leading causes: the divergent historical narratives pitting one people against another, sometimes feeding chauvinistic ideologies already laced with beliefs of victimization and injustice, and held, especially, by those who then inflict pain and violence on others. Did not the Nazi Party in Germany in the 1920s and 1930s manipulate historical narratives in

[1] " ... which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind ...", Charter of the United Nations, first preambular paragraph.

[2] Charter of the United Nations, first preambular paragraph.

the service of its hate-filled ideology? Have not many other individuals and groups, elsewhere throughout the world, likewise preyed upon an "unresolved" historical narrative for political ends, thereby sharpening the risk of an eventual armed confrontation? The psychological considerations that often fuel many of our conflicts are therefore recognizable to us, but their treatment has thus far seemed elusive or deemed too dangerous to address — the wounds will just be reopened, we have believed.

In recent years, an appreciation of the importance of individual criminal accountability for the most serious crimes has increasingly captured international attention. Aside from the supreme need for justice, there is broad recognition that "forced amnesia", the traditional modus operandi of approaching reconciliation, also carries dangerous risks. As is now recognized and appreciated, the truth must claim its rightful place, not just in courts of law but also in the settlement of armed conflicts. And yet the truth can only claim its place if it is properly determined, understood and agreed upon by the former warring sides.

A central question that delegations are invited to consider in the debate is: what are the risks of the alternative? That is, if we continue to subordinate "memory" to political arrangements, security sector reform and early economic recovery, among other things, and not elevate it to a higher order of importance, do we not risk, for example, maintaining situations where all we have is a deceptive, shallow peace, or the absence of fighting masquerading as peace, rather than sustainable peace with secure foundations?

Delegations are also invited to reflect on where there are positive examples of meaningful reconciliation based on shared historical understanding helping to cement lasting peace. What lessons can be learned from these examples and how might these lessons be drawn upon to create models of best practice that can be applied in existing and future post-conflict situations?

What can or must the Security Council do specifically? The Jordanian presidency asks delegations to consider the following. If a prerequisite for any shared narrative is the availability of the documents of State, could the Council consider mandating a small United Nations historical advisory team — when the guns draw silent — to assist those authorities who seek urgently the recovery or protection of those documents? It should not end there. Could the team also assist in the early work required to set up a "functional" national archive (which, in almost all conflict-affected countries, does not exist)? Or assist in the early establishment of a national historical commission, in the event the conflict is largely internal in character, or an international historical commission, if it is international in character?

All of these issues are sensitive. Indeed, precisely because of their sensitivity, there has been a tendency to avoid them, rather than to tackle them responsibly.

In summary, the Security Council must, in the opinion of the Jordanian presidency, think differently and figure out how best to work those very physical arrangements to end the actual fighting to achieve authentic, irreversible peace, reinforced by a shared historical understanding of the prior conflict.

The Jordanian presidency therefore intends to invite the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs to brief the Security Council on the importance of learning from history generally, and how a shared understanding of the past will in turn consolidate international peace and security, the challenge of which is the foremost responsibility of the Security Council.

United Nations S/2014/31

Security Council

Distr.: General
27 January 2014

Original: English

Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic

Summary

The present report, submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution 1612 (2005) and subsequent resolutions, is the first report on the situation of children and armed conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic submitted to the Security Council and its Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. Covering the period from 1 March 2011 to 15 November 2013, it provides information on grave violations against children committed by all parties to the conflict in Syria.

The ongoing conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic has an alarming impact on children. The present report highlights that the use of weaponry and military tactics that are disproportionate and indiscriminate by Government forces and associated militias has resulted in countless killings and the maiming of children, and has obstructed children's access to education and health services. Government forces have also been responsible for the arrest, arbitrary detention, ill treatment and torture of children. Armed opposition groups have been responsible for the recruitment and use of children both in combat and support roles, as well as for conducting military operations, including using terror tactics, in civilian-populated areas, leading to civilian casualties, including children. The report also stresses the disappearance of many children. All parties to the conflict have seriously hampered the delivery of humanitarian assistance in areas most affected by the conflict, in particular across conflict lines, including besieged areas. The report also highlights that children in Syria have experienced a high level of distress as a result of witnessing the killing and injuring of members of their families and peers, or of being separated from their family and/or displaced.

The present report notes that the country task force remains constrained by serious security and access limitations that present a challenge to the effective monitoring, verification and reporting of grave violations against children inside the Syrian Arab Republic. The report also contains a series of recommendations to halt violations and increase the protection of children affected by the armed conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic.

13-62707 (E) 290114

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I. Introduction

1. The present report, which covers the period from 1 March 2011 to 15 November 2013, is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolutions 1612 (2005), 1882 (2009), 1998 (2011) and 2068 (2012), and provides information on grave violations against children committed by parties to the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic.

2. Access and security issues in the Syrian Arab Republic posed serious limitations to the reporting of grave violations against children and high risks for victims, witnesses and monitors. Consequently, the United Nations country task force was able to independently monitor and report on a limited number of cases inside Syria. The information in this report is based to a large extent on interviews conducted by the United Nations, including numerous accounts from Syrian refugees. Multiple accounts of victims and witnesses, both adults and children, corroborated the overall trends documented in grave violations against children. The information in this report is indicative only of the scale, the scope and the gravity of grave violations committed against children in Syria.

II. Political and military developments

3. Amid expressions of popular discontent over political and socioeconomic rights, civilian protests erupted in Dar'a in March 2011, in response to the alleged torture of children accused of painting anti-Government graffiti on public buildings. Following the violent suppression by Government forces,[1] demonstrations spread to other cities.

4. Alongside President Bashar al-Assad's announcement of reforms in April 2011, civilian-populated areas were shelled in military operations. The discovery of arms in the Umari mosque of Dar'a in March 2011, security forces firing on demonstrators in the city of Homs, and the assassination of the Syrian army general Abdu Kidr al-Tallawi, as well as two of his children, in April 2011, further fuelled the escalation of armed violence. In August 2011, the Free Syrian Army (FSA) was formed by army deserters in Turkey as an umbrella for various armed factions. In October 2011, the Syrian National Council, a coalition of opposition groups, which in November 2012 became part of the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces, commonly referred to as the Syrian Opposition Coalition (SOC).

5. National, regional and international efforts to broker negotiations to halt the violence have been unsuccessful so far. On 23 February 2012, the United Nations and the League of Arab States appointed Kofi Annan as Joint Special Envoy of the United Nations and the League of Arab States on the Syrian crisis. However, a ceasefire, agreed to on 12 April 2012, failed to hold. The United Nations Supervision Mission in Syria (UNSMIS) was forced to suspend its activities by August 2012. Lakhdar Brahimi was appointed Joint Special Representative of the United Nations and the League of Arab States for Syria.

[1] Throughout the report the term "Government forces", unless specified otherwise, includes the Syrian Armed Forces, the intelligence forces and associated militias, including the Shabiha and the popular committees/National Defence Forces.

6. From mid-2012, the violence escalated across the country. The Syrian Armed Forces used air strikes, heavy weaponry and cluster munitions on civilian-populated areas controlled by armed opposition groups. Pro-Government militias, initially known as the Shabiha, were reportedly armed by the Government and began operating alongside the Syrian Armed Forces. Community self-defence groups known as the popular committees were formed by pro-Government communities to protect neighbourhoods from armed opposition groups. Integrated under a national structure called the National Defence Forces early in 2013, they remained under the command of local national security agencies. In 2013, Government forces largely withdrew from the Kurdish areas. Syrian Kurdish armed groups, including the military wings of the Democratic Union Party (PYD),[2] took control of several of these areas in the north-east.

7. As of mid-2012, armed opposition groups had strengthened their control over territories in the northern, eastern and southern governorates, with increased access to weaponry, including through attacking Government installations. Improvised explosives were used throughout the Syrian Arab Republic against Government forces, resulting in civilian casualties, including children.

8. Despite repeated attempts to form a unified military entity, armed opposition groups increasingly fragmented into various military opposition alliances. FSA itself remained divided despite efforts by its Supreme Military Command and aligned brigades retained separate identities, agendas and commands. Radical ideologies increasingly characterized some of the armed opposition with the presence of foreign fighters and radical groups such as Jabhat al-Nusra (in early 2012), which formally announced its allegiance to Al-Qaida in April 2013. By 2013, the landscape of parties had completely changed, with increased presence of Al-Qaida-affiliated armed groups, including Islamic State in Iraq and Sham (ISIS) and Jabhat al-Nusra, and a proliferation of armed groups with varying command structures, political and military objectives and tactics, combined with fluidity of front lines and hostilities between armed groups themselves.

9. The humanitarian situation continued to deteriorate; by early October 2013, there were 6.5 million people displaced and in need of assistance inside the Syrian Arab Republic, including approximately 3 million children, and over 2.1 million Syrian refugees in neighbouring countries, including 1.1 million children. All Palestine refugee camps in Syria have also been affected by the conflict. At least 50 per cent of Palestine refugees in Syria have been internally displaced and large numbers have fled Syria.

III. Grave violations against children

10. Although the present report covers a period of almost three years, it describes incidents of violations in the context of various phases that illustrated the Syrian conflict. In its early stages, violations were committed largely by the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic, which led to the listing of the Government forces,

[2] PYD is a political party led by Saleh Muslim and Asia Abd Allah. Associated Kurdish militias are the Popular Protection Units (YPG) for men and (YPJ) for women, and the internal security forces "Asaysh" (APK). These troops are associated with the Supreme Kurdish Committee (DBK) and are led by the security committee that reports directly to DBK.

including the Syrian Armed Forces, the intelligence forces and the Shabiha militia in the annexes to my annual report on children and armed conflict (A/66/782-S/2012/261) for patterns of killing and maiming of children and for recurrent attacks against schools and hospitals and protected personnel. As the conflict intensified and the opposition became more organized, an increasing number of violations committed by FSA-affiliated groups were documented, leading to the listing of FSA in the annexes to my 2013 annual report on children and armed conflict (A/67/845-S/2013/245) for the recruitment and use of children. In the same report, the Government forces were also listed for grave sexual violence against children. At the end of the reporting period, the proliferation of armed entities continued to pose serious challenges to identifying perpetrators of violations and to humanitarian access to affected populations. Known perpetrators of grave violations against children include the Syrian Armed Forces; Syrian intelligence forces, such as the Syrian Military Intelligence, Air Force Intelligence, the National Security Bureau, the Political Security Directorate and the General Intelligence Directorate; Government-associated militias such as the Shabiha; the popular committees (later formalized under the National Defence Forces); Syrian Kurdish armed groups; FSA-affiliated groups; Jabhat al-Nusra; Ahrar al-Sham; ISIS; and other independent or unidentified armed groups.

A. Recruitment and use of children

11. Armed opposition groups recruited and used children, both in support roles and for combat. While no information was available on the recruitment of children by Government forces, they were responsible for the arrest, arbitrary detention and torture of children for their perceived or actual association with the opposition, and for using children as human shields.

12. Throughout the reporting period, the United Nations received consistent reports of recruitment and use of children by FSA-affiliated groups. The FSA Code of Conduct of August 2012 did not mention or prohibit the recruitment and use of children. However, monitoring and verification activities indicated that it was not conducted as a policy or systematically. Interviews with children and their parents indicated that the loss of parents and relatives, political mobilization and peer pressure from families and communities, contributed to the involvement of children with FSA-affiliated groups. Many boys stated that they felt it was their duty to join the opposition. The absence of age-verification procedures or command order prohibiting these acts also enabled child recruitment. In addition, participation of children seems to have often been facilitated by an elder male relative. For instance, in 2011, an FSA member from Homs governorate claimed that there were many children in his group, including his 15-year-old son. Although children were trained in using weapons and knives, the decision to arm a child was made on an individual basis. Various armed opposition groups had different rules on the role of children, and the age at which boys were given military training and permitted to carry arms or participate in attacks. A 12-year-old boy from Idlib city, for example, claimed he had been turned down from joining his brother in FSA in 2012 owing to his age.

13. Boys aged 12 to 17 years were trained, armed and used as combatants or to man checkpoints. For instance, a 15-year-old boy reported having been recruited in April 2012 by FSA in Tall Kalakh (Tartus governorate), and having participated in military operations. After having been caught in a Government ambush, he fled the

area and left the group. Also indicative was the case of a 16-year-old boy from Homs, who reportedly joined FSA in 2012 as a combatant. In March 2013, his family reported to the United Nations that he was still fighting with the group. Two boys, aged 16 and 17 years, were reportedly treated in a makeshift hospital in February 2012 in the city of Aleppo after fighting under the command of FSA. FSA also used children as cooks, porters, cross-border smuggling of arms, lookouts, spies and messengers, as well as to clean weapons and prepare and load ammunition. For instance, a 17-year-old boy from Al Qusayr, Homs governorate, was trained, given a weapon and used to assist civilians trapped or wounded during shelling, and to bury the dead. Cases were also documented of boys and girls being used by FSA in cross-border and cross-line medical evacuations for the delivery of medical supplies to field hospitals and to assist emergency and trauma health services, which put them at high risk.

14. Cases of recruitment and use of children by Syrian Kurdish armed groups were documented in particular towards the end of the reporting period. Reports of boys and girls aged 14 to 17 years associated with Syrian Kurdish armed groups in Al Hassakeh governorate in support and combat functions were documented and verified. Children have mostly been used to man checkpoints and transfer information and military supplies, but they have also been trained to participate in combat. A 17-year-old boy stated that he had joined Syrian Kurdish armed groups in July 2012 to protect his neighbourhood in the border town of Al Qamashli (Al Hassakeh governorate). He claimed that he had received training and later had participated in military operations and guarded checkpoints. Allegations were also received of children associated with Jabhat al-Nusra and ISIS, but no cases could be verified at the time of writing the present report.

15. Of particular concern were cases of recruitment or attempted recruitment of children within refugee populations in neighbouring countries. The majority of incidents were related to recruitment by FSA-affiliated groups or Syrian Kurdish armed groups. The lack of education or job opportunities and peer pressure were identified as key factors leading to the recruitment of refugee children.

16. The United Nations did not receive reports of children having been formally recruited by Government forces. However, Government forces, including the Shabiha militia and the popular committees/National Defence Forces, reportedly intimidated and seized young males, including those under the age of 18, to join their ranks at checkpoints and during raids in pro-Government and contested areas. In one instance in July 2012, a man reported to the United Nations that the Syrian Armed Forces had tried to recruit his 16-year-old son while they were passing a checkpoint in Deir ez-Zor governorate.

17. The United Nations also gathered reports of the use of children as human shields during Government forces ground operations, particularly ones that were carried out in 2011 and 2012. For example, during Ramadan in 2011 in Kafr Nubl (Idlib governorate), Government forces reportedly used civilians, including at least eight children, as human shields, threatening to kill the children if the opposition did not surrender; the fate of the eight children remains unknown. In April 2012, the Syrian Armed Forces reportedly invaded Deir Balbi (Homs governorate) and forced women and children into the street. As FSA groups approached the town, civilians, including children, were reportedly forced to line up and stand between the tanks and soldiers of the Syrian army to dissuade FSA groups from attacking. In March

2012, in Homs city, the Syrian Armed Forces reportedly abducted children from schools and marched them in the streets with loudspeakers announcing their arrival and informing potential attackers not to fire as they had children with them. In August 2012, in Kuferzita village, Hama governorate, the Syrian Armed Forces reportedly arrested a large number of children, both boys and girls, mainly between the ages of 10 and 12, and used them as human shields. Children were also forced to face Government tanks, sing pro-Government songs and organize a demonstration in favour of the President of the Syrian Arab Republic under threat that they would be arrested or detained. The Syrian Armed Forces reportedly abducted approximately 20 of these children, who were released a week later in a state of shock and with marks of torture.

Detention of children for alleged association with armed groups

18. Children have been arrested, detained, ill treated and tortured in detention facilities, including illegal facilities, by Government forces in large-scale arrest campaigns, particularly in 2011 and 2012. Children have been arrested for their or their relatives' actual or perceived participation in demonstrations or support to armed opposition groups. The United Nations collected reports of children who were arrested in their homes, schools and hospitals and in the streets, and at checkpoints in Dar'a, Idlib, Homs, Aleppo, Deir ez-Zor and Damascus governorates. Children arrested in 2011 and 2012 reportedly transited through multiple detention facilities, and were often held in intelligence forces detention facilities, sometimes for months.

19. Some detention facilities, such as schools, hospitals, private homes and checkpoints, did not meet the international minimum standards on juvenile justice. Multiple accounts of children and adult witnesses indicate that the majority of children were held in the same cells as adults, and that children as young as 11 years old suffered ill treatment and acts tantamount to torture to extract confessions or humiliate them or to pressure a relative to surrender or confess. Ill treatment and acts tantamount to torture reportedly included beatings with metal cables, whips and wooden and metal batons; electric shocks, including to the genitals; the ripping out of fingernails and toenails; sexual violence, including rape or threats of rape; mock executions; cigarette burns; sleep deprivation; solitary confinement; and exposure to the torture of relatives. Reports indicate that children were also suspended from walls or ceilings by their wrists or other limbs, were forced to put their head, neck and legs through a tire while being beaten, and were tied to a board and beaten. For example, a 16-year-old boy reported being arrested by the Syrian Armed Forces in March 2012 and detained with approximately 20 other children. Children and adults were beaten with metal bars, their fingernails were pulled out and their fingers were cut; or they were beaten with a hammer in the back, sometimes until death.

20. Access to children detained was largely denied to the United Nations and humanitarian actors. In addition, family members of children detained often did not receive any information on their whereabouts.

21. While there is limited information available, allegations were received that armed opposition groups also controlled detention facilities in which children perceived to be pro-Government suffered ill treatment and torture.

B. Killing and maiming of children

22. At the time of writing the present report, the United Nations estimated that more than 100,000 individuals had been killed, including more than 10,000 children, and many more injured since March 2011. The United Nations gathered reports on children who were injured during hostilities due to heavy shelling and aerial bombardments. In some cases the injuries consisted of multiple traumas caused by burns, shrapnel wounds, the severing of limbs or spinal cord injuries. The limited treatment options sometimes required amputations, which in turn led to infections, paralysis and/or permanent disabilities.

23. Throughout 2011 and 2012, children as young as 11 years old were among anti-Government protestors who were reportedly injured or shot dead by Government forces in Dar'a, Homs, Idlib, Aleppo, Damascus, Hama and Deir ez-Zor governorates. In one case, on 12 December 2011, a 16-year-old boy participating in a demonstration in the Old City of Homs was shot in the back by a Government sniper and subsequently paralyzed. A witness at a demonstration in Idlib governorate in June 2012 claimed that he had taken two boys aged 12 and 17 years, who had been shot at by Government forces, to a hospital, where they had subsequently died.

24. The targeting of and military activities in residential areas led to the killing and maiming of children. For instance, in July 2011 a 14-year-old boy carrying bread out of a bakery was reportedly killed by a sniper in Homs governorate. A father reported that, in August 2011, in the Khaldieh area of Homs, his seven-month-old son was shot in the neck by a sniper positioned at a Syrian Air Force checkpoint opposite his home. The killing and maiming of children by Syrian Armed Forces and Shabiha elements was also reported in the context of ground operations, including during house-to-house searches for opposition members. Government forces also reportedly used indiscriminate weapons with disproportionate force. From July 2012 on, consistent reports described the use of cluster munitions and ground-to-ground missiles or "barrel" bombs on civilian areas. Thermobaric bombs were used in Aleppo city during 2012, which destroyed entire blocks of residential buildings. In addition, numerous reports of the use of expanding bullets against children were received.

25. In 2012 and 2013, Government forces blockaded villages and cities and conducted intensive shelling and air strikes, killing and maiming children in Al Hassakeh, Aleppo, Damascus, Dar'a, Hama, Homs, Idlib and Latakia governorates. In one incident on 26 September 2013, a 10-year-old girl was killed and her four brothers, aged 4 to 10 years, were maimed during the bombing of Hayya village, Aleppo governorate. In another incident in September 2012, in Khirbet Al Ghazaleh (Dar'a governorate) heavy shelling by Government forces hit a group of fleeing women and children, reportedly killing two children and severely injuring two children. During the battle for Al Qusayr (Homs governorate) in May 2013, witnesses consistently reported indiscriminate, disproportionate shelling and the use of snipers, against fleeing civilians. Government airstrikes repeatedly targeted internally displaced persons (IDP) camps near the Turkish border; for example, on 25 June 2013, Bab al-Salam camp. At the time of writing the present report, intermittent hostilities, including mortar shelling and airstrikes, continued in and around the Palestinian camps of Yarmouk, Husseiniyah, Sbeineh, Barzeh, Jobar, Qaboun, Khan Eshieh and Dar'a.

26. Children were also the victims of mass killings allegedly committed by Government forces in Dar'a, Hama, Homs and Tartus governorates, mostly in 2012 and 2013. On 25 May 2012, in Al Houleh district (Homs governorate) over 100 individuals, including at least 49 children, were reportedly killed; most were shot at close range. The United Nations spoke with an eyewitness who stated that his wife and three children (two boys aged five and eight years, and one girl aged three years) were killed in front of him, while his 10-year-old daughter was hit by a bullet and one son was still missing. Children were also reportedly among the dozens of victims of mass killings in the towns of Al Bayda and Baniyas (Tartus governorate) on 2 and 3 May 2013. In several of these instances, children appeared to have been killed in their homes, shot at close range.

27. During the first two years of the conflict, the majority of incidents of killing and maiming of children were attributed to Government forces. However, mainly owing to increased access to heavy weapons and the use of terror tactics, armed opposition groups increasingly engaged in such acts during 2013.

28. Children were the victims of mass killings in Latakia governorate that were committed by a coalition of armed opposition groups allegedly including Ahrar al-Sham, ISIS, Jabhat al-Nusra, Jaish al-Muhajireen wal-Ansar and Suqour al-Izz during the so-called Barouda offensive against Alawite villages on 4 August 2013. At least 18 children, including boys and girls under the age of 10, were killed and an unknown number of children were maimed. Most children were shot in their houses or while trying to flee with family members. In some instances, civilians reported that armed opposition groups tried to relocate civilians before launching operations. In most incidents, however, FSA-affiliated and other armed groups conducted military operations in densely populated areas, leading to the displacement and civilian casualties, including children. Armed opposition groups reportedly used snipers, mortars, rockets and improvised explosive devices in residential areas.

29. Armed opposition groups also engaged in the summary execution of children. Lack of access, including for security reasons, has prevented the United Nations from systematic documentation. Trends are believed to be much higher than the number of recorded cases. For instance, in 2011 in Damascus governorate, FSA elements reportedly killed a 16-year-old boy, who had allegedly been coerced to work with the Government when his father was detained by Government forces. The United Nations also received reports of children killed by Jabhat al-Nusra, including, a 16-year-old boy who was shot dead in April 2013 in Al Hassakeh governorate. Also in Al Hassakeh governorate, a 14-year-old boy was reportedly shot dead by elements of Syrian Kurdish armed groups associated with PYD during a demonstration of another Kurdish faction.

30. Children were also caught in cross-fire between Government forces and armed groups, or between armed groups themselves. For instance, in August 2013, in an attack by Jabhat al-Nusra in Al Hassakeh governorate, three boys, aged 15 to 16 years, who were manning a checkpoint of Syrian Kurdish armed groups associated with PYD, were severely injured. In May 2013, a 13-year-old girl was injured in the cross-fire between Government forces and FSA elements while attempting to flee Al Qusayr.

31. According to credible information, a number of mortar attacks in and around Damascus killed at least 9 children and injured at least 43 in November 2013. For example, on 11 November, four children and a bus driver were reportedly killed and four children and two superintendents were injured after a mortar hit a school bus outside a school in the Bab Sharqi area of Damascus.

32. In addition, the Syrian Ministry of the Interior has shared with the United Nations its records on children who allegedly were killed or injured by armed opposition groups in various governorates. According to those figures, at least 130 children were killed, including in shelling, and by gunshots and summary executions, and at least 118 children were injured between 10 November 2011 and 22 December 2013.

33. The United Nations Mission to Investigate Allegations of the Use of Chemical Weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic, in its report on the alleged use of chemical weapons in the Ghouta suburb of Damascus on 21 August 2013 (A/67/997-S/2013/553), concluded that chemical weapons were used on a large scale, resulting in numerous casualties, particularly among civilians, including many children. The report also stated that surface-to-surface rockets containing the nerve agent sarin were used in Ein Tarma, Mo'adamiyah and Zamalka in Rif Dimashq. In addition, the United Nations received indications of further use of chemical weapons, reportedly causing child casualties in Aleppo, Homs, Idlib and Damascus governorates, but was not in a position to confirm these allegations or to identify perpetrators.

C. Sexual violence against children

34. Sexual violence in relation to the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic is believed to be largely underreported owing to fears of reprisals and social stigmatization, combined with the lack of safe and confidential response services. Sexual violence against girls and women, or the fear of sexual violence, was reported as one of the reasons for which families were internally displaced or fled Syria.

35. The United Nations documented sexual violence against children while detained by Government forces in formal or informal detention facilities. Sexual violence was reportedly used to humiliate, harm, force confessions or pressure a relative to surrender. Incidents of sexual violence or threats of sexual violence were perpetrated mostly by members of the Syrian intelligence services and the Syrian Armed Forces against persons perceived to be part of or affiliated with the opposition. Sexual violence reportedly included electric shocks to, or burning of, the genitals, and the rape of boys and, in a few instances, of girls. Boys in detention were also sexually mocked and humiliated, and threatened with the rape of family members. A 16-year-old boy from Idlib governorate, for example, reported that, in March 2012, he was arrested with five other boys between the ages of 13 and 15 years at a checkpoint near his school and detained in a centre run by intelligence forces. The boy reported that he witnessed his 14-year-old male friend being sexually assaulted and then killed. In another example, the United Nations gathered information on the medical treatment of two boys, aged 15 and 16 years, who had been arrested in Douma, Rif Dimashq, in July 2012, and detained for three months in the Air Force Intelligence Centre in Damascus, where they were allegedly sexually assaulted.

36. The United Nations also received reports of allegations of rape, including gang rape, and other forms of sexual violence against women and girls, including in the presence of relatives, by Government forces, in particular at checkpoints or during incursions and house searches of families perceived to be pro-opposition. Individuals in Idlib governorate reported that they or their neighbours had housed or helped a number of young female rape victims fleeing from Bab Amr district (Homs

governorate) following ground operations by Government forces in August 2012. In another documented case, the Syrian Armed Forces were searching a neighbourhood for civilians involved in anti-Government demonstrations in Homs governorate in July 2012, but instead they arbitrarily arrested a 14-year-old girl, detained her over a six-month period and raped her.

37. Allegations of sexual violence by armed opposition groups were also received, but the United Nations was unable to further investigate them at the time of writing owing to lack of access.

38. Gender-based sexual violence and exploitation and the general vulnerability of children displaced within and outside the Syrian Arab Republic to such abuses remained of grave concern and are among the most worrisome consequences of the humanitarian crisis resulting from the conflict in Syria.

D. Attacks on schools and hospitals

39. Schools and hospitals have been seriously affected by the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic and disproportionally targeted by all parties. Attacks on schools and hospitals, their widespread military use and the targeting of teachers and medical personnel by all parties have severely disrupted children's right to access to education and health services. In addition, indiscriminate Government airstrikes and shelling by armed opposition groups on populated areas damaged or destroyed education and health facilities.

40. As at October 2013, according to Government statistics, more than 3,000 of the 22,000 schools in the country had been damaged or destroyed. More than 1,000 schools were being used as IDP shelters. An estimated 2.26 million children in the Syrian Arab Republic were not attending school or were attending irregularly. More than 52,500 teaching staff (22 per cent) and 523 school counsellors (18 per cent) did not report to work. Approximately 1,615 schools in Syria are operating on double shifts. Access to education for Palestine refugee children has also been compromised. At the time of reporting, only 39 of the 118 schools of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East were operating, some on a triple shift system, while 71 schools were closed, with 8 being used as IDP shelters and another 8 partially functioning, which were also being used as IDP shelters.

41. In 2011, Government forces reportedly targeted schools where students and teachers were believed to be participating in anti-Government demonstrations. Witnesses reported that schools were damaged or destroyed, and many schoolchildren and teachers were arrested at school. Government forces also attacked schools with artillery, and positioned snipers in school facilities in Damascus, Homs, Hama, Aleppo and Dar'a governorates. In one incident in September 2011 in Al Qusayr, a Shabiha element allegedly shot at a school building from the playground, killing a 15-year-old girl and injuring several children. On 12 December 2012, according to an 11-year-old boy from Daraya (Damascus governorate), his schoolmate was shot dead while running away from Government forces shooting at his school, reportedly killing and injuring more children. At the end of 2011, and increasingly throughout 2012 and 2013, schools were also hit by Government air strikes and heavily shelled, mostly in Aleppo, Dar'a, Hama, Homs

and Idlib governorates. For instance, in December 2012, five children were killed in an air strike on the public school of Al Houleh (Homs governorate).

42. Schools have also been used as detention centres, mostly by Government forces. For example, six boys from Kafr Nabl (Idlib governorate) were reportedly arrested in March 2012 at a checkpoint and detained for 11 days by the Syrian Armed Forces and Shabiha in a local school.

43. The United Nations also received information on the destruction of schools during incursions or raids on villages by armed opposition groups. In February 2013, two schools were reportedly used as military bases by Jabhat al-Nusra combatants in Tall Brak and Al Hol (Al Hassakeh governorate). In May 2013, two schools were reportedly looted by FSA elements in Hama, resulting in their closure and the interruption of classes for about 1,500 students. Additional information on summary executions of teachers, including in front of their students, by radical armed groups was also received.

44. All parties had used schools as military barracks, operational bases, snipers postings or detention facilities, including while children were attending classes, putting them at extreme risk of being attacked. In Aleppo, a primary school allegedly partially used by an FSA group as a base was targeted by Government forces in May 2012, injuring 15 children aged 6 to 12 years. Later in 2012, FSA groups reportedly used two schools as operational bases in Salahuddin area (Aleppo governorate) and three schools as weapons storage houses and military bases in Al Qusayr (Homs governorate), interrupting the education of about 2,100 children. In addition, since mid-2013, ISIS in northern Syria has been attempting to control the curriculum in schools and has set up Islamic schools in which children are reportedly indoctrinated to fight for "jihad".

45. In November 2013, several attacks were reported on schools in Damascus. Mortar rounds reportedly hit school complexes in the Al Dweila, Bab Sharqi and Al Qassa areas of Damascus on 3 and 11 November, respectively, killing children and school personnel. On 13 November, fearing further attacks, the Ministry of Education suspended teaching in these affected areas for three days.

46. According to information shared with the United Nations by the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic, at least 3,004 schools have been destroyed since the beginning of the conflict and 1,068 schools, which account for 20 per cent of all schools in Syria, have been transformed into shelters, reportedly depriving almost 2 million children access to education. The Government also shared records on 28 attacks on schools and school buses, which were allegedly perpetrated by armed opposition groups between 20 November 2012 and 22 December 2013.

47. Reports indicate that Government forces were the main perpetrators of attacks against hospitals and other health-care infrastructure, mainly opposition-run makeshift health facilities and of threats and attacks against medical personnel. In addition, Government forces used a number of hospitals for military purposes, erecting checkpoints at their entrance, interfering with the work of medical staff, arresting patients and health personnel and posting snipers on their rooftops. Snipers were reportedly posted on the roof of both public and private hospitals in Homs governorate. Reports also indicate that medical personnel and the provision of health care were instrumentalized by Government forces to gain military advantage

over the opposition and deny access to medical care to both combatants and civilians perceived to be pro-opposition.

48. Due to fear of detention, mistreatment or execution by Government forces, opposition health networks established temporary field hospitals in private homes and mosques. Multiple accounts of medical personnel or volunteers working in those facilities indicate that Government forces repeatedly targeted and shelled makeshift or regular hospitals in opposition-controlled areas, as well as ambulances, resulting in patients and medical personnel being killed or injured, but also in damage to medical infrastructure and supplies. For example, on 13 September 2013, the "Al-Nur" field hospital in Yabrud (Homs governorate) was shelled by a Syrian Armed Forces aircraft; at least eight patients were killed.

49. Numerous accounts describe instances where Government forces used health facilities to identify injured opposition members, supporters or their relatives, or denied access to medical care to civilians, including children, perceived to be from opposition-controlled areas. For example, Albir Hospital in Al Rastan, Homs governorate, was repeatedly attacked by the Syrian Armed Forces. In January 2012, the hospital was reportedly surrounded by tanks. Soldiers arrested about 25 persons and allegedly executed them at the hospital entrance. The same hospital was later partially used as a military base by Government forces. in August 2013, the continued presence of military personnel reportedly led to a 70 per cent decline of consultations by patients.

50. Injured opposition fighters and civilians, including children, admitted to Government hospitals in perceived pro-opposition areas in Aleppo, Dar'a, Homs and Idlib governorates were reportedly exposed to arrest, detention, ill treatment and acts tantamount to torture by civilian doctors, and/or elements of Government forces. Reports also indicate that civilians perceived to be affiliated with the opposition were in many instances prevented from crossing Government checkpoints or entering a hospital to seek emergency medical treatment. In December 2011, for example, the Syrian Armed Forces reportedly erected a barrier to control access to Ibn Sina Hospital in Rif Dimashq. Medical personnel also felt at risk of arrest, detention, ill treatment or execution if they did not cooperate with orders to refrain from treating those perceived as pro-opposition. The United Nations also gathered information on arrests of medical personnel for treating civilians perceived to be with the opposition.

51. The United Nations also received reports on instances where armed opposition groups denied medical treatment to injured pro-Government fighters. Misuse of ambulances by elements of the armed opposition was also documented. In addition, it was documented that, on several occasions in 2012, FSA used ambulances in Idlib governorate to cross Government checkpoints.

52. According to records shared by the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic with the United Nations for this report, 63 hospitals, 471 health centres and 412 ambulances have been targeted since the beginning of the conflict. In addition, 240 medical staff members allegedly have been killed. The Government alleges that armed opposition groups were responsible for these attacks.

53. According to a report of the Syrian Ministry of Health of July 2013, 60 per cent of public hospitals had been affected by the conflict, including 38 per cent of which were out of service and 22 per cent damaged. In addition, 38 per cent of all

public health centres and 92 per cent of public ambulances were either damaged or destroyed. As at October 2013, ongoing fighting had reportedly forced the closure of 12 of the 23 health clinics providing services to Palestine refugees in the Syrian Arab Republic. In Homs, for example, 50 per cent of all doctors were believed to have fled. In the Aleppo area, 36 doctors remained practising, compared to 5,000 before the conflict.

E. Abduction of children

54. The abduction of civilians, including children, has become a prominent feature of the Syrian conflict. The United Nations received several reports of abduction of children by pro-Government militias or armed opposition groups in exchange for ransom or the release of prisoners, or as pressure on relatives perceived as supporting the opposing party. In many cases, the whereabouts of these children remain unknown. For example, a 17-year-old boy was abducted in Homs governorate by elements of the Shabiha outside his home in February 2013. In another incident, in July 2013, a 15-year-old girl was abducted by armed elements while fleeing with her family from Abu Al Zuhur, Idlib governorate. She was released in exchange for the family's car and money. Approximately 50 children were reportedly among the 200 persons taken hostage by several opposition armed groups during the "Barouda" offensive, which began on 4 August 2013 in Latakia governorate. At the time of writing this report, their location and the groups holding the hostages remained unknown.

F. Denial of humanitarian access

55. Despite the achievements of humanitarian actors and the continued scaling up of the humanitarian response, access to areas of Rif Dimashq, including Mo'adamiyah, Yarmouk and Hajar Al Aswad, and Al Hassakeh, Al Raqqa, Aleppo, Dar'a, Deir ez-Zor, Hama, Homs, Idlib and Quneitra governorates, remained challenging at the time of writing this report. Constraints were mainly due to insecurity, fluid frontlines and checkpoints erected by all parties, as well as administrative impediments. The United Nations has repeatedly called for unimpeded humanitarian access to populations across the country. As at October 2013, an estimated 6.5 million internally displaced people, including approximately 3 million children, as well as hosting communities and refugees from Iraq and Palestine, were in need of humanitarian assistance.

56. Both Government forces and armed opposition groups had been keeping areas under siege for months, thereby impeding humanitarian access to civilians, including children. Several areas in Rif Dimashq, such as Mo'adamiyah and East Ghouta, had reportedly been under siege by Government forces since October 2012, depriving more than 1 million civilians of urgent humanitarian assistance. In addition, the Yarmouk and Sbeineh camps for Palestine refugees had also been sealed off, preventing assistance to affected Palestine refugees. The old city of Homs had reportedly been under siege by both Government forces and armed opposition groups since the beginning of 2012, and no humanitarian assistance had been delivered to the besieged population since August 2012. Also, in Nubbul and Al Zahra' villages (northern Aleppo governorate), more than 35,000 people had reportedly been besieged by FSA-affiliated and other armed opposition groups

including Ahrar al-Sham, Kathaib al-Haq, Nooreldin al-Zenki Brigades, Jabhat al-Nusra and ISIS, and deprived of access to basic commodities and humanitarian assistance since the beginning of 2013.

57. The increasing numbers of checkpoints and incidents involving the diversion of humanitarian supplies by all parties to the conflict hampered the regular supply of food and other humanitarian items across the country. Medical supplies entering areas under the control of armed opposition groups had been routinely obstructed by Government forces. Contents of medical kits, including essential obstetric care, life-saving and surgical equipment, were removed at checkpoints, on the basis of the argument that these items could help treat injured opposition fighters. In addition, the Government imposed lengthy bureaucratic procedures for humanitarian personnel, logistics and supplies, including in the delay or non-issuance of visas, permits for armoured vehicles and authorization for travel within the Syrian Arab Republic.

58. According to information shared by the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic, a set of new measures have been taken recently to facilitate humanitarian access across the country. New mechanisms for granting authorizations have been put in place, including new procedures for dispatches from United Nations warehouses, which are however being implemented on an ad hoc basis. In addition, progress, sometimes modest, has been made in the entry of humanitarian personnel, mobility and deployment of personnel into the country and the dispatch of humanitarian supplies and services, including mobile health units, medical supplies and surgical equipment.

59. The fragmentation of armed opposition groups made it increasingly difficult to negotiate safe access across conflict lines. Jabhat al-Nusra and other unidentified armed groups had routinely attacked humanitarian convoys in the reporting period. For instance, in June 2013, Jabhat al-Nusra reportedly looted three humanitarian trucks containing 3,000 food baskets between Al Mayadin, Deir ez-Zor governorate, and Al Hassakeh city, Al Hassakeh governorate, and a truck transporting medicine and vaccines from the World Health Organization and the Ministry of Health in Saraqeb near Idlib. In June 2013, four trucks carrying 160 tons of humanitarian assistance were temporarily hijacked and looted by elements of Al-Khandak in Idlib governorate.

60. Humanitarian workers, both national and international, have been intimidated, threatened, arrested, detained, injured or killed. Since the beginning of the conflict to the time of writing the present report, 25 Syrian Arab Red Crescent volunteers have been killed, impacting the delivery of essential life-saving supplies and services. On 13 October 2013, seven humanitarian staff (six from an international agency and one national NGO staff), were abducted in Idlib governorate; four of them were released, while the whereabouts of the three others remained unknown at the time of writing. In addition, a total of 17 United Nations staff were abducted in the reporting period. In one incident in May 2013, an armed opposition group under a commander named Abu Hamza temporarily abducted eight United Nations staff members near Aleppo, and stole a United Nations armoured vehicle. As at 31 October 2013, 13 United Nations national staff had been killed, while another 22 remained detained, missing or abducted.

IV. Advocacy and dialogue with parties to conflict to prevent and halt grave violations against children

61. At the invitation of the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic, my Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, Leila Zerrougui, visited Syria twice, in December 2012 and July 2013.

62. The establishment of a functioning monitoring and reporting mechanism on grave violations against children to allow a thorough follow-up to the listing of parties to the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic was the priority of her first visit. Subsequently, a United Nations country task force on monitoring and reporting was established with the consent of the Government on 6 March 2013. My Special Representative also reached out to both the Government and FSA, calling for their commitment to end and prevent all grave violations against children.

63. On 14 March 2013, the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic shared a report on grave violations against children in the Syrian Arab Republic with the United Nations country task force, highlighting measures it had taken to respond to the impact of the conflict on children, including education for displaced children and the rebuilding of damaged schools. While advocating for a formal structure to be put in place to address grave violations against children, the country task force regularly raised its concerns with the Government regarding the scale of violations against children and the need to put in place prevention mechanisms.

64. To develop preventive measures to protect children against grave violations, the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic adopted a series of legislative reforms. Law No. 11/2013 entered into force on 30 June 2013, criminalizing all forms of recruitment and the use of children under the age of 18 by armed forces and armed groups, including taking part in direct combat, carrying and transporting weapons or equipment or ammunition, planting explosions, standing at checkpoints or carrying out surveillance or reconnaissance, acting as a distraction or human shield or assisting and/or serving the perpetrators in any way or form. The same law increased the sentence for the crime of rape against a girl under the age of 15. On 2 April 2013, the Government also criminalized the abduction and kidnapping of individuals in the context of the crisis with legislative decree 20/2013.

65. During my Special Representative's visit to the Syrian Arab Republic and neighbouring countries in July 2013, she called for the comprehensive implementation of the new legislation and its application to all parties to the conflict. Furthermore, she advocated that the Government establish a formal ministerial coordination mechanism to prevent and respond to violations against children and to facilitate the sharing of information on grave violations within the Government and with the United Nations. The release of children arbitrarily detained for their alleged association with armed opposition groups was equally discussed with Government representatives of various ministries and was foreseen to be tackled as a priority issue during the first meeting of the interministerial committee on children and armed conflict of the Government. Advocacy on these issues was repeated to the Syrian Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs during his visit in New York on 28 September 2013. The Committee's first meeting with the United Nations took place on 12 December 2013. The United Nations has no information on any action taken by the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic regarding children detained for alleged association with armed groups.

66. Advocacy to FSA commanders in the Syrian Arab Republic to end the recruitment and use of children in conflict was renewed during my Special Representative's second visit and, in October 2013, to representatives of the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces (Syrian Opposition Coalition) in New York. As with the Government, the situation of the civilian population in besieged areas was addressed, and the United Nations continuously called on all belligerents of such areas to allow humanitarian assistance to people in need. By visiting four neighbouring countries of the Syrian Arab Republic, my Special Representative also gathered a first-hand assessment of the regional consequences of the conflict. With the continuously increasing number of Syrian refugees, the pressure on host countries, in particular on social services, reached critical levels. In all of the four neighbouring countries visited, the number of refugees in urban areas and in camps puts increasing pressure on hosting communities. This raises additional child protection concerns, including lack of education and health care, the risk of child labour, incidents of child recruitment among the refugee population, sexual exploitation and forced marriages of minors.

67. Efforts have also been made by the Syrian Commission for Family Affairs to initiate an awareness campaign with the support of the United Nations Children's Fund to prevent violations against children's rights. The United Nations is currently supporting the Ministry of Social Affairs to develop a strategy to prevent and end the association of children with armed forces and armed groups and other grave violations against children. Public awareness campaigns and the integration of mine/explosive remnants of war risk education into the education system are being undertaken, including in partnership with the Ministry of Education. In September 2013, the Government also responded positively to a United Nations request to sensitize State-backed media to avoid displaying children "confessing to being associated with armed groups".

V. Recommendations

68. The suffering endured by the children in the Syrian Arab Republic since the outset of the conflict, as documented in this report, is unspeakable and unacceptable. Violations must come to an end now. I therefore urge all parties to the conflict to take, without delay, all measures to protect and uphold the rights of all children in Syria. In particular, I urge all parties to:

(a) Respect international human rights and humanitarian law, stop all grave violations committed against children and take all appropriate steps to protect children and other civilians in the course of military operations;

(b) Investigate relevant incidents and take disciplinary measures in line with international standards against individuals suspected of having committed these violations and abuses;

(c) Put an end to all indiscriminate and disproportionate attacks on civilian areas and public spaces including the use of terror tactics, airstrikes, chemical weapons and heavy artillery;

(d) Allow and facilitate full unimpeded humanitarian access to all affected populations, including to besieged communities and other hard-to-reach areas, and implement humanitarian corridors and pauses to allow for the delivery of essential

supplies to besieged communities and immunization campaigns. In particular, I urge all parties to the conflict to allow the delivery of medical supplies to all people requiring medical assistance, without distinction, in compliance with common article 3 of the Geneva Convention and its Additional Protocols;

(e) Immediately release abducted women and children;

(f) Cease the military use of schools and hospitals and protect the civilian character of those institutions;

(g) Immediately take all measures to prevent and halt all forms of sexual violence and abuse against boys and girls.

69. As a State party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and to its Optional Protocol on children and armed conflict and other core international human rights treaties, the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic carries the primary responsibility to ensure the protection of children throughout its territory. I call upon the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to:

(a) Put an end to the killing and maiming of children, in contravention of international law, to investigate these incidents and to make the results of these investigations known;

(b) Make hospitals neutral spaces by ensuring equal access for all patients to hospitals and other medical facilities and to refrain from posting troops inside and in the vicinity of hospitals;

(c) Halt the arbitrary arrest and detention of children, including those detained for alleged association with the armed opposition, release all children detained by any State or parastatal entities on these charges and allow for access to detainees by international monitoring bodies;

(d) Take all necessary steps to facilitate the expansion of humanitarian relief operations and lift impediments that could potentially delay the delivery of humanitarian assistance and goods;

(e) Ensure that all Government-affiliated militias respect international human rights and humanitarian law and put an end to all violations against children, including but not limited to the killing and maiming of children and the recruitment and use of children;

(f) Ensure that the interministerial committee for children and armed conflict meets regularly with the United Nations country task force on monitoring and reporting to discuss questions related to the protection of children in the Syrian conflict, as well as to devise a framework to address and prevent ongoing violations against children. In this regard, I also urge the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to enter into dialogue with the United Nations with a view to preparing and implementing action plans to end the killing and maiming of children, in contravention of international law, sexual violence against children in detention and attacks on schools and hospitals and their protected personnel.

70. I urge all armed opposition groups to:

(a) Put an end to the killing and maiming of children and other grave violations committed against children, in contravention of international law, to publicly denounce all such violations, and take all appropriate steps to protect

children and other civilians in the course of military operations and in areas under their control;

(b) Investigate and take disciplinary measures, as relevant and in line with international standards, against those elements in their ranks who are known or believed to be responsible for crimes and grave violations against children;

(c) Take steps to prevent and halt the recruitment and use of children under 18 years of age within their ranks, including its clear prohibition in formalized codes of conduct, and engage with the United Nations to develop and implement action plans to this end;

(d) Refrain from carrying out attacks on humanitarian convoys and ensure their unimpeded access to and through areas under their control.

United Nations S/2014/32

Security Council

Distr.: General
17 January 2014

Original: English

Letter dated 17 January 2014 from the Permanent Representative of Tunisia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to write to you in reference to document S/2014/10 dated 2 January 2014 regarding matters of which the Security Council is seized and the stage reached in their consideration.

In this connection, I have the honour to inform you that, upon instructions of my Government, Tunisia requests the retention of the following items, listed in paragraph 3 of the above-mentioned document:

66. Letter dated 1 October 1985 from the Permanent Representative of Tunisia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/17509)

69. Letter dated 19 April 1988 from the Permanent Representative of Tunisia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/19798)

I should be grateful if this letter could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Mohamed Khaled **Khiari**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

14-20935 (E) 200114

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United Nations S/2014/33

Security Council

Distr.: General
17 January 2014

Original: English

Report of the Secretary-General concerning the credentials of the alternate representative of Rwanda on the Security Council

Pursuant to rule 15 of the provisional rules of procedure of the Security Council, the Secretary-General wishes to report that he has received a letter dated 17 January 2014 from the Permanent Representative of Rwanda to the United Nations stating that Mr. Lawrence Manzi has been appointed alternate representative of Rwanda on the Security Council.

In the opinion of the Secretary-General, this letter constitutes adequate provisional credentials.

14-20947 (E) 200114

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United Nations S/2014/34

Security Council

Distr.: General
27 January 2014

Original: English

Letter dated 27 January 2014 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit a letter dated 22 January 2014 from Léonie Banga-Bothy, Minister for Foreign Affairs, African Integration, la Francophonie and Central Africans Abroad of the Central African Republic (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would bring the present letter and its annex to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) **BAN** Ki-moon

14-21855 (E) 280114

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Annex

As made clear in the report of the assessment mission established by the Secretary-General, pursuant to Security Council resolution 2121 (2013), restoring security in the Central African Republic is a matter of priority. The current situation is a direct threat to international peace and security.

The efforts of the international community to restore security and law and order in the Central African Republic through the African-led International Support Mission in the Central African Republic (MISCA), and the assistance of French forces for the implementation of the mission's mandate, have been welcomed by various parties, including the European Union.

The latter has just informed me that, on 20 January 2014, the Council of the European Union approved the Crisis Management Concept governing the future deployment of a European Union force in the Central African Republic.

The Head of State of the Transition, who will not be assuming office until 23 January 2014, has requested me to communicate to you in advance her agreement to the provision of an additional European Union contribution to the international community's efforts, in the form of a military operation, in accordance with the 20 January 2014 decision of the Council of the European Union, in the interests of protecting civilians and restoring security and law and order.

I wish to point out the immediate need for the Security Council to adopt a resolution making it possible to give effect to the decision of the Council of the European Union regarding that operation, thus enabling the deployment of the European Union force in the territory of the Central African Republic.

In that connection, the authorities of the Central African Republic confirm formally their support for a Security Council resolution providing a suitable mandate for the European force.

Your support, and the support of the Security Council through such a resolution, would be highly appreciated and would enable the European Union deployment.

(*Signed*) Léonie **Banga-Bothy**
Minister for Foreign Affairs, African Integration,
la Francophonie and Central Africans Abroad

United Nations S/2014/35

Security Council

Distr.: General
20 January 2014

Original: English

Letter dated 20 January 2014 from the Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Upon instructions from my Government, I would like to bring to your attention the heinous terrorist attack that targeted an official of the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Sana'a, Yemen, on 18 January 2014. This terrorist act claimed the life of Mr. Abolghassem Asadi, a diplomatic member of the Embassy who was on official duty at the time of attack.

It is obvious that the terrorists behind this atrocity were inspired by extremism and a blind violence that knows no boundary, acting against diplomatic corps that are protected by international diplomatic law. The Islamic Republic of Iran, while welcoming the prompt condemnation by the Security Council of another terrorist attack against the Iranian Embassy and its staff in Beirut, Lebanon, on 19 November 2013, expects that the Council will condemn this new atrocity in the strongest possible way. The Council is also urged to call on Member States to exercise maximum vigilance in regard to the terrorists behind such attacks, deny all forms of financial and other kinds of support to them and fully cooperate to bring the perpetrators to justice.

The Islamic Republic of Iran, a target and victim of terrorism for more than three decades, expresses its deep concern over the continuation of such acts of terrorism fuelled by bigotry as well as wrong policies in encouraging violence and extremism that undermines regional and international peace and security.

I would be grateful if the present letter could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Mohammad **Khazaee**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

14-21042 (E) 210114

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United Nations S/2014/36

Security Council

Distr.: General
20 January 2014

Original: English

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Office in Burundi

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution 2090 (2013), in which the Council extended the mandate of the United Nations Office in Burundi (BNUB) and requested the Secretary-General to inform it of progress in implementing the mandate of BNUB, as assessed against the benchmarks jointly agreed with the Government of Burundi, with a view to determining the future evolution of BNUB into a United Nations country team presence. The present report provides an update since the previous report of 18 January 2013 (S/2013/36), and is structured around eight benchmarks and the findings of the strategic assessment mission, which was conducted in Burundi pursuant to resolution 2090 (2013). In the annex to the present report, baselines and indicators of progress are reviewed in additional detail.

II. Progress in peace consolidation

A. Democratic process

2. During the reporting period, Burundi made important strides towards more open and inclusive political dialogue. The return of key opposition leaders and their inclusion in formal meetings that led to the adoption of several consensual political frameworks were notable developments. However, the adoption of a number of restrictive laws and ongoing intimidation, harassment and violent attacks by youths affiliated with political parties contributed to decreasing political space and limited the ability of opposition actors to exercise their political freedoms ahead of the 2015 elections. Government efforts to push through a wide-ranging and controversial revision of the Constitution further fuelled tensions.

3. In a positive development regarding political dialogue, BNUB, in close collaboration with the Government, organized and hosted a workshop on electoral lessons learned in Bujumbura from 11 to 13 March, in which representatives of major political parties and other actors were brought together for the first time since the 2010 elections. The participation of several opposition politicians who had returned from exile for the occasion, such as Alexis Sinduhije of the Mouvement pour la solidarité et le développement (MSD) and Pascaline Kampayano of the

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Union pour la paix et le développement (UPD), signalled a thaw in the relationship between the Government and the extraparliamentary opposition. The workshop was also attended by former Presidents of Burundi, Domitien Ndayizeye and Sylvestre Ntibantunganya. The former leader of the Forces nationales de libération (FNL), Agathon Rwasa, and the former UPD presidential candidate, Léonard Nyangoma, were represented by their spokespersons. The main objective of the workshop was to draw lessons from the 2010 elections and chart a course for the 2015 elections. A 42-point consensual electoral road map was agreed at the meeting, covering aspects of the legal framework for the elections; the creation of a security environment that protects political actors and facilitates their activities; and the management and conduct of the elections. In October, the President of Burundi, Pierre Nkurunziza, endorsed the road map and stressed the commitment of the Government to implementing all of its recommendations.

4. Against the backdrop of the successful workshop on electoral lessons learned, the Government organized, in partnership with the United Nations, a follow-up workshop in Kayanza from 22 to 24 May, again with inclusive participation, in order to accelerate the revision of the 2009 electoral code. Participants reached consensus on 22 out of 23 amendments to the 2009 electoral code proposed by the Independent National Electoral Commission. The new draft electoral code contains important provisions, including on the use of a single ballot paper and on combining the presidential, legislative and communal polls, seen by Burundian political actors as essential to increasing transparency and preventing election fraud.

5. Following the returns of Ms. Kampayano and Mr. Sinduhije, Mr. Rwasa, who contested the 2010 elections for FNL, re-entered political life on 6 August 2013 after three years in hiding. His return leaves Mr. Nyangoma, the head of the Conseil national pour la défense de la démocratie (CNDD), as the only major opposition leader who has not yet returned to Burundi. Just days after the return of Mr. Rwasa, on 13 August 2013, the chiefs of the Congolese Tutsi community in Burundi filed a complaint against him with the Chief Prosecutor for his alleged involvement in the massacre of 166 Congolese Banyamulenge in Gatumba in 2004, an accusation that he has denied. On 14 August, he was expelled by the FNL executive bureau, which accused him of destabilizing the party. On 20 October, the new FNL President, Jacques Bigirimana, was elected during an ordinary congress held in Bujumbura. However, Mr. Rwasa continues to dispute his expulsion and to claim the leadership of FNL.

6. A workshop held in Bujumbura from 27 to 29 November to assess progress in implementing the electoral road map showed that mistrust between the Government and the opposition remained a persistent challenge. The participants, which included political parties and actors, as well civil society organizations and national and international non-governmental organizations, adopted a series of recommendations to speed up implementation of the road map, including an agreement to organize consultations on the constitutional review process; the organization of periodic meetings among political parties and actors; and the creation of an inclusive mechanism to facilitate consultation between the Independent National Electoral Commission and political parties and other actors throughout the preparatory phase of the elections. On 11 October, the Commission held its first meeting with political parties. However, the regular dialogue mechanism requested by the opposition political parties has yet to be established.

7. The issue of the eligibility of President Nkurunziza to run for a third term in the 2015 elections led to a sharp diversion of views between the ruling party and the opposition. On 7 September, at an event marking the third anniversary of the ruling party's election victory, the President of the Conseil national pour la défense de la démocratie-Forces pour la défense de la démocratie (CNDD-FDD), Pascal Nyabenda, declared that President Nkurunziza had served only one term in office through direct suffrage, having been elected by the population only in 2010. His statement drew reactions from opposition leaders, who argued that another mandate for President Nkurunziza would be a violation of the Constitution and the 2000 Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi (hereinafter, "Arusha accords"). On 12 September, the CNDD-FDD Spokesperson, Onésime Nduwimana, reiterated the same position and noted that the Constitutional Court would decide on disagreements about the interpretation of legal instruments.

8. Opposition and civil society activists continued to complain about being prevented from exercising their political rights and freedoms by the Imbonerakure, the youth wing of the ruling party. During the period under review, BNUB documented 50 such politically motivated acts involving Imbonerakure members, including intimidation, violence, disruption of political meetings and physical assaults. There were also complaints that Imbonerakure members were typically not arrested or, if detained, were immediately released following the intervention of local authorities. On one notable occasion, members of the Imbonerakure paraded in military gear in Ngozi on 7 September during the celebrations of the third anniversary of the ruling party's election victory. On 8 May, the President of the Sahwanya-Front pour la démocratie au Burundi (Sahwanya-FRODEBU) and the Alliance démocratique pour le changement-Ikibiri (ADC-Ikibiri) called on members of his party's youth wing to respond in kind to violent acts from the Imbonerakure. Meanwhile, the President of the Imbonerakure declared that CNDD-FDD did not endorse violent acts and called upon the judiciary to individually punish those who violated the law. However, his assertion was disputed by others, including the President of the Union pour le progrès national (UPRONA), who said that those were not acts committed by individuals since the Imbonerakure were often accompanied or protected by local administrators or the Burundian National Police. On 7 September, the President of CNDD-FDD called on the Imbonerakure to rid the movement of members who tarnish the name of the group and stressed the need for the Imbonerakure to respect members of other political parties. However, tensions between youth groups remained high, as on 6 October when over 100 members of the Imbonerakure clashed with over 50 MSD youth supporters in Gihanga Commune, Bubanza Province, during a morning workout exercise, leaving three Imbonerakure and two MSD members severely injured.

9. In the light of continuing acts of political violence, BNUB organized meetings with leaders of youth movements affiliated with the main political parties who unanimously agreed on the need to hold an inclusive workshop to develop a code of conduct that would address election-related violence. Youth-related violence remains a highly sensitive issue and requires urgent action, particularly in the lead-up to the 2015 elections.

10. During the reporting period, several pieces of legislation were passed limiting the exercise of political rights and freedoms, including the Media Law and the Law on Public Gatherings, which were promulgated on 4 June and 5 December, respectively. The former was widely condemned by national and international

actors, who expressed serious concerns over some provisions having the potential to undermine freedom of expression, thereby running counter to international human rights standards and instruments of which Burundi is a signatory. Among the causes for concern was the obligation for journalists to reveal their sources in certain situations, as well as fines imposed for press offences. The Law on Public Gatherings constitutes another infringement on political rights and freedoms since it limits, for instance, the duration of public demonstrations to one day, and makes organizers of public meetings directly responsible for any infractions of the law during such gatherings by any person present. It also allows authorities to send a delegate to monitor all public meetings and demonstrations and to interrupt or cancel the activity if they determine that there is a risk to public order. Amid criticism from non-governmental organizations in Burundi, a 2012 draft law regulating the activities of non-profit organizations was not adopted by the National Assembly in 2013.

11. In a similar vein, and underlining the persistent fragility of Burundi's political landscape, efforts by the Government to revise the 2005 Constitution without broad-based consultations led to significant political tensions and raised fears among opposition parties of an authoritarian turn in the country. On 9 and 10 October, the Council of Ministers discussed and adopted a draft law to revise the 2005 Constitution, citing the need to harmonize the Constitution with the draft electoral code, as well as the Treaty for the Establishment of the East African Community. The draft Constitution eliminates requirements for qualified majorities for most decisions of Parliament, allows the ruling party to appoint judicial, military and high civilian officials without Senate approval and creates a post of Prime Minister, replacing one of the Vice-Presidents while retaining one Vice-President of a different ethnicity than the President. Draft provisions would also lower the parliamentary majority required to appoint members to the election and human rights commissions, from 75 to 51 per cent, thereby increasing their dependence on the Government.

12. Opposition parties, civil society and religious actors immediately denounced the absence of consultations and argued that the draft Constitution would cement the power of the ruling party and fundamentally alter the ethnically based power-sharing balance and principles enshrined in the Arusha accords, which ended a long history of devastating and divisive ethnic conflict in the country. On 19 October, UPRONA and FRODEBU-Nyakuri, both represented in the Government and Parliament, called upon members of Parliament not to vote for the constitutional changes in their current form, while on 31 October, the President of FNL and the Union des partis de l'opposition extra-parlementaire (UPO), called for a consensual revision of the Constitution. On 24 November, the ADC-Ikibiri coalition issued an ultimatum to the Government to open the process to consultations within 14 days, threatening to stage mass demonstrations if the demand were not met. On 6 December, in a rare public statement, the Conference of Catholic Bishops issued a communiqué also calling for inclusive and genuine dialogue, stressing that the Parliament, while legally entitled to adopt a new constitution, could not do so without fully taking into account the views expressed by the people.

13. In order to help stave off a crisis around the constitutional review, my Special Representative in Burundi, Parfait Onanga-Anyanga, met with several senior political leaders, including the President of the National Assembly and the President of ADC-Ikibiri, throughout November and early December. On 18 December, the

Chair of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, Paul Seger of Switzerland, wrote to the President of the National Assembly noting that the constitutional review process would benefit from broad and inclusive consultations, while offering the support of the Commission to contribute to the success of the constitutional revision process.

14. In the light of considerable domestic and international concern, the President of the National Assembly convened a workshop on 19 and 20 December to hear the views of all political parties and civil society on the constitutional review. At the workshop, which was attended by political parties and other actors, the majority of the participants called for a limited constitutional amendment, focusing only on those provisions in the Constitution that enjoyed broad consensus at the workshop and postponing the discussion of contentious areas, which included many substantive provisions that would affect decision-making and the structure of Government, until after the 2015 elections.

15. On 16 October, Bernard Busokoza of the UPRONA party was appointed First Vice-President, replacing Thérence Sinunguruza, also a member of the UPRONA party, who was forced to resign from the Government on 14 October after losing his party's support. Mr. Sinunguruza was accused by his party of opposing ongoing talks to reunite UPRONA and of fomenting divisions among the UPRONA leadership to further his personal interests. During his acceptance speech, Mr. Busokoza declared his intention to work in the interests of all Burundians and prioritize the reunification of his party, the amendment of the Constitution and the revision of the electoral code.

16. On 9 December, the Vice-President of Sahwanya-FRODEBU and a former Vice-President of Burundi, Frédéric Bamvuginyumvira, was arrested for allegedly encouraging debauchery, adultery and attempting to bribe a law and order official. While the first two charges were dismissed, the attempted corruption charges were upheld. On 12 December, senior officials of Sahwanya-FRODEBU called for his immediate release, accusing the ruling party of trying to cripple the leadership of ADC-Ikibiri ahead of the 2015 elections.

17. In response to the letter dated 13 April 2013 from President Nkurunziza to me, in which he requested United Nations support for the 2015 elections, I deployed a needs assessment mission to Burundi from 2 to 12 September 2013. The mission noted that the 2015 elections would be a test for Burundi's peace consolidation efforts and stability, underlining the need for all stakeholders to create an environment conducive to credible, inclusive and peaceful elections. The mission concluded that United Nations electoral assistance to Burundi should be regularly reassessed against progress made by the country in implementing proposed reforms and in improving the pre-electoral environment. Such assistance should be provided in an integrated manner through BNUB, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and other United Nations entities in their respective areas of responsibility from 2013 until the end of 2015. In particular, the mission noted that United Nations electoral assistance should be funded through a UNDP-managed basket fund and focus on reinforcing the capacities of the Independent National Electoral Commission to administer the elections.

B. Security and stability

18. The security situation across the country remained stable. However, crime, especially arson, kidnapping, assault and theft, increased in 2013, often as a result of worsening economic conditions and increased unemployment.

19. The threat of a possible terrorist attack remains a cause of concern in Burundi as the country is a troop contributor to the African Union Mission in Somalia. On 25 September, the national police conducted a search operation in four provinces, including in Bujumbura Mairie, in connection with the 21 September terrorist attack on the Westgate Mall in Nairobi. More than 300 people were arrested, and military uniforms and weapons were seized during the operation. Search operations continued in October, leading to several arrests.

20. A slight reduction was noted in the number of armed confrontations between Government security forces and armed opposition groups, including FNL remnants, Congolese militia groups and criminal elements, decreasing from a monthly average of about seven in 2012 to four in 2013. Kibira forest and the provinces of Cibitoke and Bubanza, which border the Democratic Republic of the Congo, were the scenes of the most significant confrontations.

21. BNUB continued to support the professionalization of security and defence forces through programmes implemented by bilateral partners in cooperation with the Government. In partnership with national counterparts, about 1,900 members of the Forces de défense nationale were trained on human rights, while 60 officers were trained to become human rights trainers. Specialized training sessions were also organized for about 45 officers in the national intelligence service on judicial issues, training of trainers, human rights and governance.

22. Alongside other partners, BNUB provided technical advice regarding the development of the strategic plan for the Ministry of Public Security, which was adopted by the Government in June 2013. Together with the defence review for the Ministry of Defence, which has yet to be completed, the strategic plan will provide the baseline for reforms in FDN and the national police.

23. The second national voluntary disarmament campaign, which had been planned with support from UNDP and BNUB, was officially launched on 11 November, with the Law on Small and Light Weapons having been amended on 6 November to allow for a grace period of three months for those who were still holding weapons illegally. BNUB also sponsored a workshop on 25 and 26 September on the role of women in the second disarmament campaign, which led to the creation of a network of women from the defence, security forces and civil society, in order to advocate for and increase women's participation in the disarmament process.

C. Transitional justice

24. No significant progress has been made towards the establishment of a truth and reconciliation commission since a draft law on such a commission was transmitted to the Parliament in December 2012. In an address to the nation on 26 August 2013, President Nkurunziza declared that the truth and reconciliation commission would be put in place by the end of the year. In addition, progress in establishing a special tribunal has been slow.

25. In preparation for the eventual adoption of the draft law on the truth and reconciliation commission, BNUB organized awareness-raising and capacity-building workshops for key stakeholders, including members of Parliament and civil society. A workshop for representatives of the National Assembly was held on 18 April and another one for Senators on 27 November. The workshops focused on international norms and standards relevant to the adoption of laws in that area. The workshops also disseminated the outcome of the 2009 national consultations that had captured the views of Burundians regarding transitional justice mechanisms.

D. Governance and institution-building

26. Given the slow progress in implementing the national strategy on good governance and the fight against corruption, the Council of Ministers acknowledged on 23 May the need to accelerate implementation. In 2013, the Anti-Corruption Brigade received 300 complaints, of which 247 were transmitted to the Parquet général at the Anti-Corruption Court for appropriate action. During the period under review, the Anti-Corruption Brigade recovered 1.2 billion Burundi francs that had been deposited at the Public Treasury. From January to November 2013, the Anti-Corruption Court received 205 complaints, of which only 32 were prosecuted. For the third year in a row, Burundi improved its ranking in the "ease of doing business" global report, rising from 159th to 140th position. At the same time, the 2013 Transparency International report ranked Burundi 157th of 175 countries in its Corruption Perceptions Index.

27. The Office of the Ombudsman continued to play an important role in defusing social tensions and resolving conflicts arising from land disputes, the abuse of power in the public administration, the enforcement of legal judgements and financial embezzlement. In 2013, the Office received 131 complaints and dealt with 140 cases.

28. The handling of many land disputes by the Commission nationale des terres et autres biens during the reporting period has been without controversy. However, the implementation of some of its decisions has elicited violent responses from the public. This was the case on 26 March when the Commission faced resistance from the local population while trying to evict two residents from houses in Bujumbura Mairie. While Commission staff were accompanied by a significant national police force, the residents were supported by a group of local youths. The expulsions were condemned by opposition leaders as a violation of the Arusha accords. At a workshop on the Commission held in Bujumbura on 24 June, President Nkurunziza stressed the need for the Commission's work to be guided by the Arusha accords, including the principles of promotion of justice, reconciliation and social cohesion. On 23 and 24 October, the Council of Ministers adopted two draft laws on the mission, composition, organization and functioning of the Commission, and on the establishment of a special tribunal to deal with land issues, which have arisen as a result of conflict in Burundi. The draft was widely criticized by opposition political parties and civil society actors, who expressed concern that a specialized court might lack objectivity. On 28 December, the draft law was adopted by the majority CNDD-FDD, backed by Sahwanya-FRODEBU. Parliamentarians of UPRONA and those representing the Batwa community walked out in protest.

29. BNUB continued to support the strengthening of oversight institutions, notably the Parliament, the Office of the Ombudsman, the Anti-Corruption Brigade and non-governmental organizations active in the fight against corruption. BNUB also sponsored the elaboration of an internal manual and a code of conduct for the Anti-Corruption Brigade and, on 19 and 20 March, funded a sensitization workshop organized by the Anti-Corruption Brigade in Kayanza for civil society organizations, civil servants, and national police and military officers. Further, BNUB supported two workshops on how to improve collaboration between non-governmental organizations and Government institutions in the fight against corruption; two anti-corruption awareness-raising workshops organized by the Conseil national des églises; and one awareness-raising campaign on good governance and accountability at the decentralized level organized by the non-governmental organization Observatoire de l'action gouvernementale.

E. Rule of law

30. In the course of 2013, some positive developments were registered in the justice sector. New court regulations, which BNUB had been supporting since 2008, were adopted on 12 June 2013. Some of the provisions are expected to contribute to the improvement of the performance of the country's courts. A new criminal procedure code, which conforms to international standards, was also promulgated and will enhance respect for the right of victims and defendants and improve oversight by prosecutors of the judicial police.

31. However, the lack of progress in establishing an independent judiciary remains a concern. The National Conference on Justice (Etats généraux de la justice) — a national forum to address judicial challenges, including the independence of the justice system, in a transparent and inclusive manner — was held in Gitega from 5 to 9 August. The Conference, which was supported by BNUB, UNDP and bilateral partners, brought together 350 participants from the Government, civil society organizations, judicial institutions, political parties and partners. However, the Conference failed to adopt the recommendations guaranteeing the independence of the judiciary. A follow-up committee to the Conference has yet to be established.

32. BNUB continued to support the Ministry of Justice particularly on improving judicial independence and accountability. In collaboration with UNDP, BNUB worked to finalize the strategic plan of the Conseil supérieur de la magistrature and organized training on judicial ethics for more than 196 magistrates from the higher courts. It also supported judicial oversight bodies by developing new inspection tools, organizing pilot inspections and helping judicial inspectors to draft reports. BNUB, as part of the Ministry of Justice committee against corruption, also supported the development of the strategic plan on combating corruption in the justice sector, in addition to finalizing the ongoing training programme for magistrates.

33. In the area of corrections, BNUB assisted the Ministry of Justice in rehabilitating a number of prisons, revising the prison legal framework and drafting a corrections policy. However, serious challenges remain in this area, including overcrowding, lack of resources and the absence of a unified organizational structure under the Ministry of Justice.

F. Human rights

34. The human rights situation in Burundi continues to be a cause for concern owing to recurrent reported cases of extrajudicial killings, as well as acts of intimidation, harassment and violence allegedly committed by members of the Imbonerakure. The impunity that many perpetrators enjoy also remained an issue of major concern.

35. The Independent National Commission on Human Rights continued to contribute to strengthening the culture of human rights, expanding its reach to the population with the establishment in May 2013 of three regional offices in Ngozi, Gitega and Makamba. The regional offices were funded by the Peacebuilding Fund and donors. As a follow-up to the opening of those offices, BNUB organized a series of workshops to explain the mandate, role and functions of the Commission and to build partnerships between the Commission, local administrations, civil society actors and the local population. On 14 May 2013, in recognition of its crucial role in promoting and monitoring the effective implementation of international human rights standards in Burundi, the Commission was granted "A" status, valid from 2012 to 2017, by the International Coordinating Committee of National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in Geneva. Between January and July 2013, the Commission received 102 cases and conducted investigations into 84. However, major challenges remain, including in providing services throughout the entire national territory and in building sufficient capacity to carry out consultative functions, conduct the effective monitoring of economic, social and cultural rights, as well as of cases of gender-based violence, and utilize effective assessment techniques.

36. The number of extrajudicial killings increased slightly, from 30 in 2012 to 35 in 2013 as documented by BNUB. However, none of the killings were found to be politically motivated. During the same period, BNUB documented 125 cases of torture and other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, most of which were perpetrated by the national police and local administrators. In 13 of those cases, law enforcement actors were accompanied by elements of the Imbonerakure. Impunity remained a major problem in Burundi; for instance, only 16 of the 61 cases of extrajudicial killings documented by BNUB in 2011 have so far been tried in a court of law. Ten perpetrators were convicted and received sentences ranging from 20 years to life in prison; six were acquitted; and four cases were dismissed owing to lack of evidence. Investigations are continuing on the remaining cases.

37. Victims and witnesses are at times reluctant to testify for fear of reprisal from alleged perpetrators, notably when they are high-ranking members of the security forces. In an effort to help to address that challenge, BNUB organized a workshop in Bujumbura on 7 May 2013 for the adoption of a strategy on the protection of victims and witnesses in Burundi. As a follow-up to the workshop, a study on protection mechanisms was conducted between February and May 2013 to identify the country's needs in that area and to provide proposals for the development of a draft law on victims and witness protection.

38. Civil society organizations continued raising awareness on human rights and, with the support of BNUB, improved their monitoring and reporting capacities. BNUB also worked closely with the Ministry of National Solidarity, Human Rights and Gender to help the country to meet its reporting obligations to the human rights

treaty bodies and to implement the recommendations of the universal periodic review. The Ministry, with the support of BNUB, is drafting a legal framework for the protection of human rights defenders.

G. Regional integration

39. Despite continuing to strengthen its regional relations, Burundi faced challenges in deepening its regional integration within the framework of the East African Community. In response to the series of tripartite summits of the East African Community, held by the Presidents of Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda, to which Burundi and the United Republic of Tanzania were not invited, the Government of Burundi issued a communiqué on 27 September emphasizing that decisions on East African Community projects should be reached by consensus, in line with the Treaty for the Establishment of the East African Community. The Government also announced that Burundi would not participate in programmes in whose design and implementation it was not involved.

40. In a positive development, Burundi attended the 15th Ordinary Summit of East African Community Heads of State held in Kampala on 30 November, which approved the protocol on the establishment of the East African Monetary Union and recommended that the single customs territory system commence on 1 January 2014. Throughout the reporting period, BNUB continued to provide support to the Ministry of External Affairs and International Cooperation through the organization of capacity-building activities on a range of pertinent matters, including the harmonization of Burundian laws with East African Community legislation.

41. Burundi also hosted two meetings of the Parliamentary Forum of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region from 11 to 13 November and the meeting of Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries held on 9 and 10 May, which agreed to establish a regional court with jurisdiction over transnational crimes in the Great Lakes region.

H. Social and economic development

42. The economy of Burundi was projected to grow by 4.8 per cent in 2013, with inflation declining from a peak of about 25 per cent in March 2012 to 8.2 per cent in late May 2013. At the same time, the 2013 national report of Burundi on the Millennium Development Goals showed that Burundi was likely to achieve only 1 of 18 initial targets. Since the State budget depends heavily on external financing, the crisis in the euro zone, among other things, led to lower budgetary support starting in early 2013. The Government adopted fiscal and budgetary measures to preserve the sustainability of public finances, including the recovery of value-added tax on food and petroleum products.

43. In a follow-up to the conference held in Geneva on 29 and 30 October 2012 for Burundi's development partners, the Government of Burundi organized two conferences, on 15 and 16 July and from 28 to 30 October, with support from BNUB, UNDP, the African Development Bank, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Both conferences aimed at helping to strengthen cooperation between the Government and its bilateral and multilateral partners and produced specific plans to implement Burundi's poverty reduction strategy. The

second conference, which focused on investments in governance, peace consolidation, energy, environment, regional integration and public health, saw donors pledge $1.75 billion for various projects and programmes. Overall, the Government expressed satisfaction with the delivery of the Geneva pledges, estimated at 52 per cent, and committed to pursue the reforms recommended at the conference held in Geneva and the two follow-up conferences.

44. As a result of renewed hostilities in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo in 2013, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Burundi registered some 7,000 asylum seekers from South Kivu as at October 2013. At the end of 2013, about 55,600 refugees were expected to be registered. UNHCR is currently working with resettlement countries on a multi-year plan aiming at the resettlement of 10,000 Congolese refugees from Burundi. At the same time, legal frameworks for the repatriation of Burundian refugees remaining in countries of asylum in the region are being finalized.

45. Since July 2013, between 35,000 and 40,000 Burundian migrants illegally residing in the United Republic of Tanzania have been deported to Burundi by the Tanzanian authorities. Since the majority of that population is returning to areas with deep socioeconomic challenges, including places where former Burundian refugees were recently reintegrated, there are serious risks of a long-term impact on the coping capacity of the receiving communities. On 26 August, President Nkurunziza met with President Jakaya Kikwete in the United Republic of Tanzania to discuss bilateral issues, including the expulsion.

46. UNDP assisted the Government and communities in developing and implementing the national strategy on socioeconomic reintegration for people affected by conflict. UNDP also supported the implementation of 174 projects to rehabilitate social infrastructure and the creation of 14,647 short-term jobs. The programme was expanded recently to support the reintegration of 35,000 returnees from Mtabila camp in the United Republic of Tanzania.

III. Cross-cutting issues

A. Gender

47. In an effort to strengthen medical, psychological, judicial and social support for victims of sexual and gender-based violence, the Government adopted a draft law in June 2013 to strengthen the protection of victims and improve prevention. In addition, the new criminal procedure code promulgated in April 2013 introduced special sections on sexual and gender-based violence in the courts and public prosecutor offices while also allowing civil society organizations to subrogate victims before the courts at both the national and local levels.

B. Child protection

48. About 20,000 Burundian children were repatriated and another 20,000 expelled from the United Republic of Tanzania during 2013 as part of the wave of expulsions from the United Republic of Tanzania (see para. 45 above). The United Nations is providing support to the Government for birth registration, access to

water and the health and education of returned children, but the sustainable reintegration of the children remains a challenge that the Government of Burundi has yet to address.

49. The Council of Ministers adopted a national child protection policy in March and minimum standards on children living in institutions and deprived of family care in May. Following a presidential decree on 5 June, the National Children's Forum was launched on 12 June, the Day of the African Child, and 34 children, representing all provinces of the country, were elected as members. In addition, more than 1,000 child protection committees have been functioning at the community level in order to prevent violence against children and provide care for vulnerable children. Despite such significant progress, strengthening the capacity of the country's social welfare workforce and adopting the Child Protection Code remain urgent priorities to ensure the protection of child rights and care in Burundi.

C. Activities related to the Peacebuilding Commission

50. The Chair of the Burundi Configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission continued to support the work of my Special Representative and engaged the Government and key partners in the follow-up to the 2012 conference held in Geneva for Burundi's development partners. The Chair was actively engaged on the Burundi dossier with the members of the Burundi configuration both in New York and during visits to Burundi in January, June and October 2013. During his visit in October 2013, the Chair attended the second follow-up meeting to the development partners conference and emphasized the need to address key peace consolidation challenges, including the constitutional review process, the revision of the electoral code and violence related to youth wings affiliated with political parties.

51. On 3 December, my Special Representative co-signed the peacebuilding priority plan for Burundi with the Minister of External Relations and International Cooperation. The plan will provide funding for critical areas to foster the consolidation of peace and democracy in the run-up to the 2015 elections, including social cohesion and national dialogue, youth participation in political and social initiatives, human rights, and the resolution of land disputes. The plan is expected to be submitted to the Forum politique for information in January 2014 before being officially submitted to the Peacebuilding Support Office for review and approval. The implementation of the plan will be managed by a local joint steering committee, which will be co-chaired by the Government and the United Nations and include members from the Government, the United Nations, international partners and civil society.

52. The ongoing reintegration project under the second Peacebuilding Fund tranche delivered 86 per cent of its activities by 30 October and was extended until March 2014. Carried out by several United Nations funds and programmes, the project focuses its work in the three provinces of Bujumbura Rural, Cibitoke and Bubanza, where there is a high concentration of ex-combatants, internally displaced persons and returnees. Its objective is to consolidate peace and rebuild social cohesion. An independent evaluation commissioned by the Peacebuilding Support Office took place in November to assess the progress made through Peacebuilding Fund projects since 2007, and its findings are expected in early 2014.

IV. Strategic assessment

53. In its resolution 2090 (2013), the Security Council took note of the progress made in the implementation of the BNUB mandate and in Burundi's peace consolidation efforts, as assessed against the benchmarks for the future evolution of BNUB into a United Nations country team presence. The Council requested that I provide a report reflecting particularly the outcome of the strategic assessment mission that I had indicated my intension to deploy to Burundi in the course of 2013. In a note verbale dated 16 August 2013, the Government of Burundi called for the termination of the BNUB mandate on 15 February 2014, expressed the hope that the strategic assessment mission would "meet the Government's views", and conveyed its wish to see BNUB hand over its responsibilities to the United Nations county team.

54. The strategic assessment was conducted from September to December, in a process led by the Department of Political Affairs through the Burundi Integrated Task Force, which included representatives of relevant departments, offices, agencies, funds and programmes. It comprised an analysis phase, followed by a field mission, in which a multidisciplinary team held consultations with representatives of the Government of Burundi, political actors, civil society, the African Union, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and regional and international partners. Subsequently, I consulted President Nkurunziza and regional leaders on the findings of the strategic assessment before the findings and recommendations were finalized.

55. The strategic assessment mission found that despite the remarkable progress Burundi has achieved in recent years, the country continues to experience considerable tensions in its efforts to consolidate democracy and the rule of law. The political scene remains deeply polarized, with the Government using its prerogatives and dominance in Parliament to enact laws that infringe upon political and civil rights, thus contributing to a shrinking of political space, and with the opposition threatening to take steps to confront the Government.

56. In respect of human rights, the strategic assessment mission found that, despite increased national capacities, there was limited progress in the prosecution of alleged perpetrators of serious human rights violations. Limited space for political dialogue negatively affected the accountability and effectiveness of various sectors, notably security institutions and the judiciary. Insufficient efforts have been made to address past grievances, and the delay in the establishment of transitional justice mechanisms contributes to the entrenchment of impunity.

57. Despite sustained financial support by donors, the strategic assessment mission found that the socioeconomic peace dividends Burundians expect have been slow to materialize. The country's social and economic indicators are among the lowest in the world, with three quarters of Burundians living in extreme poverty. Particular attention will be required to mitigate the risk that the economic situation might exacerbate existing tensions, leading to renewed violence.

58. Against such a background, the strategic assessment mission noted that the general elections in 2015 are widely regarded as a potential trigger for violence. While there are opportunities ahead, the road towards 2015 will not be smooth; indeed, the consolidation of democracy and the rule of law may drive conflict as Burundian stakeholders struggle to find a consensual way forward. Burundian

authorities at all levels expressed appreciation for the work of BNUB. While the President and ruling party insisted that BNUB had fulfilled its mandate, the opposition and civil society organizations pressed for its continuation.

59. The strategic assessment mission concluded that the continued presence of BNUB through the 2015 elections remains the preferred option for accompanying Burundians in the consolidation of peace. However, taking into account the expressed wish of the Government to draw down BNUB, while at the same time recognizing that the United Nations country team does not currently have the capacity to assume all BNUB functions, two further options could be envisaged. The second option would entail the draw down of BNUB, which would be replaced by a new peacebuilding mission with a more focused mandate, as an interim step to preparing the ground for a transition of functions to the United Nations country team. The third option, which the Council may wish to consider as a last resort, would envisage the appointment of a special envoy to promote and facilitate dialogue between national actors and mechanisms for broad-based participation in political life. The special envoy would also coordinate international efforts to ensure an environment conducive to the holding of free and open elections in 2015. The second and third options would have significant programmatic, resource and staffing implications for the United Nations in Burundi. In particular, the United Nations country team would require sufficient time and resources to develop the capacity to effectively assume the core peacebuilding tasks of BNUB, including human rights, transitional justice and other areas of governance. A special funding appeal would need to be launched to address these capacity and programming gaps in a timely manner.

60. In view of the above, I met with President Nkurunziza in Paris on 6 December to discuss the future of BNUB, noting that the findings of the strategic assessment mission, largely shared by the international community, pointed to the continuing need for a political presence of the United Nations through the 2015 elections. During the meeting, President Nkurunziza reiterated his view that a further renewal of the BNUB mandate would have a negative impact on partners and investors, stressing that Burundi did not want to continue to be perceived as a post-conflict country.

61. Following the meeting and a further exchange between my Special Representative and senior officials of the Foreign Ministry, I proposed to President Nkurunziza that the future political engagement of the United Nations in Burundi be modified to concentrate on the following main areas: (a) political dialogue; (b) electoral process; (c) human rights; (d) transitional justice mechanisms and support to the justice sector; and (e) capacity-building for the reform of the security sector. At the same time, the United Nations country team would take on providing support to the Government of Burundi in promoting development, strengthening governance and deepening regional integration. I also proposed that a joint transition plan between the Government of Burundi and the United Nations be developed to determine, starting in February 2014, the practical modalities for the transition of the United Nations engagement in Burundi towards activities related to development, under the direct responsibility of the United Nations country team.

62. President Nkurunziza, in his letter to me dated 31 December, expressed appreciation for the multifaceted support provided by the United Nations to the Burundian people. However, in contrast to my proposal for a future United Nations

political presence in the country, he noted that Burundi had registered some positive developments in 2013 and that "the transfer of responsibilities from BNUB to a United Nations country team could take place as of 15 February 2014, in line with resolution 2090 (2013)". The President also suggested that future political engagement could be left to the agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations system. In that context, the President stated that establishing a transitional structure, such as a follow-on United Nations mission, would be "inopportune" if the aim was to immediately facilitate the transfer of responsibilities from BNUB to a country team.

63. On 7 January, my Special Representative, together with his Deputy, who also serves as Resident Coordinator, met with his Government counterparts and advised them that the United Nations country team was currently neither prepared nor equipped to assume BNUB responsibilities. He warned that their abrupt interruption could have a detrimental impact on peace consolidation efforts in Burundi. On 12 January, he conveyed the same message directly to the Minister of Foreign Relations and International Cooperation, Laurent Kavakure. During his visit to Burundi, from 13 to 17 January, the Chair of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, Mr. Seger, also called on the Government of Burundi to ensure that the transition to the United Nations country team would take place within a reasonable time frame of at least 12 months. On 15 January, Mr. Kavakure addressed a letter to me, in which he referred to the exchange of letters between his President and me, as described in paragraphs 61 and 62 above. In the letter, Mr. Kavakure noted that his Government would be pleased to see the draw down of BNUB within a transitional period of six months, from 16 February, in order to allow for a closure of the ongoing political programmatic activities of BNUB and to enable the transfer of its responsibilities to the United Nations country team.

V. Observations and recommendations

64. Burundi has made substantial progress, overcoming formidable challenges since the end of the civil war. The country has successfully managed a delicate transition period and is consolidating its democratic institutions. Today, Burundi enjoys peace and security, regional relations are deepening and development efforts are gathering pace.

65. However, the significant gains are far from irreversible. Now, more than ever, the Government of Burundi must demonstrate visionary leadership by continuing to promote the spirit of dialogue and consensus enshrined in the Arusha accords, which has helped Burundians to address the structural causes of conflict in their country. Given Burundi's history and social make-up, majority rule and a winner-takes-all mentality could erase such hard-won gains.

66. The presidential elections in 2015 will be a litmus test for the country's long-term stability. Stakeholders across the political spectrum have laid the groundwork for the elections in the March 2013 electoral road map. This includes agreeing to the electoral reforms required to ensure that the elections are fair, inclusive and transparent, with results that are accepted by all. I call upon the Government and all political stakeholders to fully implement their respective commitments as contained in the road map.

67. A strong and healthy democracy needs a vibrant opposition. I therefore welcome the return to Burundi of political leaders who were in exile, which marked the normalization of the country's political life since the boycott of the elections in 2010. I note the increasing tensions and intra-party disputes facing some of Burundi's political parties. I urge all political parties and actors to refrain from using incendiary language and to peacefully resolve their differences through dialogue, in the interest of their own parties and for the sake of multiparty democracy in the country.

68. I am convinced that the period ahead represents an opportunity for Burundians to actively and peacefully participate in the political life of their country in order to build a better and more stable future for all. For that, Burundians across the political spectrum must be free to exercise their civil and political rights without fear of intimidation or violence. I urge the Government of Burundi and political parties to launch a public campaign against political violence ahead of the 2015 elections.

69. As the country prepares for the 2015 elections, I am troubled by the acts of violence committed by youth affiliated with political parties and by the apparent impunity they seem to enjoy. Acts of political violence, including those committed by these youths, must be prosecuted. I urge the Government and political parties to take all necessary measures to ensure that youth are not exposed to political manipulation that could lead to acts of violence and intimidation. I call upon youth to collaborate with other citizens in dedicating their energy, talent and unique perspective and experience to the important processes of reconciliation and development.

70. I welcome the constructive atmosphere that prevailed during the consultations held on 19 and 20 December on the constitutional review process chaired by the President of the National Assembly. I encourage the Burundian authorities to resist the temptation to rush such an important undertaking. Should the process continue, I call upon Burundi's political parties and other stakeholders to place national interests above all other considerations and to seize the opportunity to enhance the role of democratic institutions and promote the rule of law, justice, good governance and reconciliation.

71. While there were no politically motivated extrajudicial executions in 2013, I remain concerned that there continues to be impunity for human rights violations, including sexual violence and rape. I urge the Government to pursue its efforts to combat impunity by ensuring that those responsible for serious human rights violations are brought to justice and by scaling up the fight against gender-based violence. I appeal to the Burundian authorities to apply a strict zero-tolerance policy regarding human rights abuses committed by the security forces. I call upon them to make every effort to further professionalize the security forces and instil discipline in them, particularly the national police. I also urge partners to continue to support security sector reform in order to improve overall accountability and performance.

72. I call upon the Government to ensure that efforts to promote reconciliation and healing take root, including through the establishment of the much-anticipated truth and reconciliation commission. National and local efforts to promote conflict prevention and resolution and foster social cohesion are also required to prevent the erosion of Burundi's hard-won gains.

73. I am encouraged by the commitment of the Government to addressing the complex issue of land tenure, which is essential for lasting peace and stability. At the same time, I am concerned that the perception of unevenness created by some of the decisions of the Commission nationale des terres et autres biens could foster communal tensions with broader economic and public order ramifications, particularly when political competition intensifies during the electoral period. In their effort to promote justice, I call upon the Burundian authorities to handle land grievances and disputes in a non-partisan manner and to also address land tenure in the broader context of socioeconomic development, bearing in mind the need to foster reconciliation and national cohesion.

74. The international community has made a significant investment in Burundi. It must continue to play a constructive role through enhanced coordination, particularly for the preparations for the elections and support for security sector reform. More broadly, the significant progress Burundi has made in furthering peace and stability must be reinforced by socioeconomic development. I call upon the Government to take additional measures to improve living standards, access to health care and other social services, as well as to reduce unemployment. I encourage the Peacebuilding Commission to continue its efforts to sustain international support and mobilize resources for Burundi. I urge development partners to fill the funding gap for the implementation of Burundi's second poverty reduction strategy, including, and as appropriate, through targeted budget support. Further support to the United Nations country team through the United Nations Development Assistance Framework process is also critical.

75. I have considered the findings of the strategic review and the limited progress made towards meeting the benchmarks contained in the annex to the present report, as well as the conviction of the United Nations country team that it is unable to absorb BNUB tasks at present. I have also given serious consideration to the views expressed by the Government, as indicated in paragraphs 53 to 63 above. I am convinced that a United Nations political presence in Burundi remains necessary to further accompany the country in consolidating peace by facilitating dialogue, monitoring and reporting human rights, and establishing transitional justice mechanisms until after the presidential elections in 2015. I appreciate the wish of the Government of Burundi, as conveyed by President Nkurunziza, to assert greater national ownership over its peace consolidation process. However, the Government's request that BNUB draw down within six months as of 16 February 2014 poses a difficult dilemma, given the continuing need for a United Nations political presence whose functions cannot be entirely covered by the United Nations country team. I therefore recommend that the BNUB mandate be extended for a further period of 12 months. Should the Government persist in its position that such an extension is not acceptable, however, the Security Council may wish to consider the other options outlined in paragraph 59 above.

76. I wish to thank President Nkurunziza and his Government for their continued cooperation with the United Nations. I am also grateful to Burundi's development partners for their critical assistance to the country's peacebuilding process. Finally, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all United Nations personnel who, under the leadership of my Special Representative, Parfait Onanga-Anyanga, have continued to show commitment and dedication to the consolidation of peace in Burundi.

Annex

Benchmarks for the United Nations Office in Burundi pursuant to Security Council resolutions 1959 (2010) and 2027 (2011)

I. Democratic process

Benchmark: Continuing progress in the consolidation of democracy and the resolution of political differences through dialogue

Baseline through 2011: A spirit of dialogue and power-sharing underpinned the 2000 Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi (hereinafter "Arusha accords") and was enshrined in the Constitution of Burundi of 2005 and in the composition of the Government in 2005. Observers declared that the 2010 elections had been conducted in conformity with international norms, but they were boycotted by a number of opposition parties, whose leaders subsequently went into exile. The boycott continued to affect political life in Burundi in 2011, and tensions deepened between the Government and the Alliance démocratique pour le changement-Ikibiri (ADC-Ikibiri) grouping of extraparliamentary opposition parties. Although both sides had confirmed their readiness to collaborate, political dialogue throughout 2011 remained stalled, and no formal meetings were held between the Government and the extraparliamentary opposition parties.

Developments in 2012:[a] 2012 was marked by an absence of dialogue and little progress in the preparations for the 2015 elections. The law on the status of the political opposition was passed without the consultation of all the parties. The Government established a new Independent National Electoral Commission, with objections registered from opposition parties concerning its composition. Throughout 2012, various opposition party meetings were prohibited by authorities.

Indicators of progress	*2013 assessments*
1.1. Increasingly democratic, accountable, representative and effective State institutions	• The boycott of the 2010 elections by several political parties continued to affect Parliament, which is composed of only three parties (Conseil national pour la défense de la démocratie-Forces pour la défense de la démocratie (CNDD-FDD), Union pour le progrès national (UPRONA) and Front pour la démocratie au Burundi-Nyakuri (FRODEBU-Nyakuri)), largely dominated by CNDD-FDD • The number of question-and-answer sessions held with members of the Government in Parliament decreased to 11 (2012: 24; 2011: 35)

[a] The section summarizes the 2012 assessments of the benchmarks, as presented in the annex of the previous report (S/2013/36).

1.2. Continuing dialogue between political parties and the Government	• As in 2012, six official interactions took place between parties in power and the extraparliamentary opposition • The workshop on electoral lessons learned held in Bujumbura in March, the workshop on the revision of the electoral code held in Kayanza in May, and the assessment workshop held in Bujumbura in November on the implementation of the electoral road map deepened and strengthened political dialogue between political parties and actors • Only a select number of political parties were invited to the Permanent Forum for Dialogue among the Political Parties • As in 2012, various political party meetings were prohibited or obstructed by the Government throughout 2013. The parties affected were mainly members of the opposition coalition ADC-Ikibiri, Mouvement pour la solidarité et le développement (MSD) and supporters of Agathon Rwasa
1.3. Improved legal framework for electoral process management	The Government organized, with the support of the United Nations Office in Burundi (BNUB), a workshop in May 2013 on the revision of the 2009 electoral code. The workshop proposed a series of amendments, most of which were accepted by the Government. The new code has yet to be passed by the National Assembly
1.4. Increasing institutional capacity to move towards the 2015 elections with appropriate international financial and technical support	The Independent National Electoral Commission organized ad hoc meetings with political parties and civil society. In November, the Commission agreed to hold regular meetings with opposition parties and civil society organizations
1.5. Increasing national ownership over the electoral process	• A needs assessment mission was organized by the United Nations, in close collaboration with the Government, particularly the Independent National Electoral Commission, to determine the required framework and levels for international support to the elections in 2015 • The Government and the United Nations signed a project document in November to create, among other things, an electoral basket fund

1.6. Political consensus among all stakeholders on movement towards the 2015 elections	• In October 2013, the Council of Ministers adopted a draft law containing wide-ranging amendments to the Constitution without prior, broad-based and inclusive consultations. The draft amendments change decision-making parameters and the structure of the Government. Following domestic criticism and increased tensions, a consultative workshop on the constitutional review was organized by the National Assembly in December • The Government and the International Foundation for Electoral Systems organized a workshop in November on creating a political environment conducive to the holding of free and open elections in 2015. A draft code of conduct for the elections was discussed without reaching a consensus over a final version • On several occasions, the extraparliamentary opposition indicated that it will not boycott the elections in 2015
1.7. Increasing percentage of the population believe in the credibility of the elections	Data not available in 2013

II. Security and stability

Benchmark: A strengthening and sustainable security structure enabling Burundi to respond effectively to domestic and international security concerns while respecting global norms and rights

Baseline through 2011: A significant number of small arms remained in circulation (100,000 households according to the Small Arms Survey in 2007), notwithstanding the first civilian disarmament campaign in 2009 and efforts made through the earlier disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme. The integration of former combatants into the Burundian National Defence Forces and the Burundian National Police, the rightsizing of both forces and their respect for ethnic proportionality greatly contributed to overall stability and security. However, human rights abuses by security forces in 2010 and 2011 highlighted the need for continued professionalization and enhanced civilian oversight.

Developments in 2012: No significant reduction in the circulation of small arms was noted yet progress was made regarding the registration of the weapons of the national defence forces. The first draft of a national security strategy was prepared but not finalized. There were only minor reductions in the rightsizing of the security and national defence forces, and the National Security Council, which was created in 2012, was hampered by the absence of a clear strategy. Human rights violations by members of the national police continued to be a source of concern.

Indicators of progress	*2013 assessments*
2.1. Progress made in civilian disarmament, and in the management and control of small arms and light weapons	• In 2013, 95 per cent of the weapons of the national police were registered and marked and 100 per cent of the weapons of the national defence forces were registered (in comparison with 60 per cent and 100 per cent in 2012, respectively)
	• The second national voluntary disarmament campaign was officially launched in November 2013
	• BNUB supported a workshop on the role of women leaders in the second disarmament campaign
2.2. Progress made in the rightsizing of the security and national defence forces	• The national defence forces were reduced by 889 and the national police by 438 personnel, bringing total numbers to 27,000 (target 25,000) and 15,388 (target 15,000), respectively
	• At the same time, the national defence forces added 981 recruits and the national police 1,070 recruits for assignments in specialized services
2.3. Increasing civilian oversight over the security and national defence forces in compliance with the current constitution, laws and regulations	• Civilian oversight over security and national defence forces remained weak
	• The National Security Council met five times in 2013. BNUB continued to provide technical support to the permanent secretariat of the National Security Council
2.4. Increasing professionalization of the security and national defence forces	• The strategic plan of the national police was completed in 2013 while the defence review of the national defence forces was not finalized
	• The Government conducted a security sector reform review, with support from BNUB and bilateral partners
	• The national security strategy was adopted by the Government in June 2013. BNUB provided training on human rights, democratic governance and judicial processes to about 2,000 members of the national defence forces, the national police and the National Intelligence Service in 2013
	• The Ministry of Defence, with the support of BNUB, conducted a workshop on human rights

2.5. Increasing confidence of the population in the service delivery of the security and national defence forces	Data not available in 2013

III. Transitional justice

Benchmark: Continuing progress in transitional justice to advance victims' rights, the fight against impunity and national reconciliation

Baseline through 2011: Transitional justice is the major remaining feature of the Arusha accords for which implementation lagged. Following broad national consultations in 2009 and 2010 and extensive work undertaken by a Government technical committee, a new draft law on the establishment of a truth and reconciliation commission was presented to Parliament in October 2011.

Developments in 2012: A revised draft law on the truth and reconciliation commission was submitted to Parliament in December. The law was not adopted. No progress was achieved regarding all other indicators on transnational justice in 2012.

Indicators of progress	*2013 assessments*
3.1. Establishment of a truth and reconciliation commission in line with the 2009 national consultations, the work of the technical committee of 2011, international standards and applicable legal instruments	• No progress was registered regarding the establishment of a truth and reconciliation commission as the draft law was not adopted in 2013 • In preparation for the adoption of the draft law on a truth and reconciliation commission, BNUB organized workshops to build the capacity of key stakeholders and to provide a platform for discussions on transitional justice
3.2. Establishment of a special tribunal in line with the 2009 national consultations, the work of the technical committee of 2011, international standards and applicable legal instruments	No progress made in 2013
3.3. Existence of a follow-up mechanism for the implementation of recommendations of a truth and reconciliation commission	No progress made in 2013
3.4. Increasing ability of the political leadership to bring about reconciliation between the victims and perpetrators of past crimes	No progress made in 2013
3.5. Increasing level of satisfaction with the transitional justice process	Not applicable in 2013
3.6. Increasing percentage of the population believing that reconciliation has been achieved	Data not available in 2013

IV. Governance and institution-building

Benchmark: Increasing State authority through legitimate, democratic, accountable and effective institutions

Baseline through 2011: Following the adoption of the 2005 Constitution, key new institutions envisaged have successively been established, including the National Communications Council (2007), the National Security Council (2008), the Permanent Forum for Dialogue among the Political Parties (2010) and the Independent National Commission on Human Rights (2011). In 2011, with assistance from the United Nations and other partners, Burundi developed a number of important strategies reflecting national governance priorities, including the national strategy on good governance and the fight against corruption. The establishment of the Anti-Corruption Brigade (2006), the Anti-Corruption Court (2006), the Office of the Ombudsman (2011) and the Burundi Revenue Authority (2011) were important institutional developments to enhance the efficiency and accountability of the Government. While corruption remained a serious concern, the beginnings of sustained improvement were evident.

Developments in 2012: 2012 saw little progress in the implementation of the national strategy on good governance and the fight against corruption. The amount of revenue collected by the Burundi Revenue Authority increased, and Burundi significantly improved its ranking in the World Bank's "ease of doing business index". The implementation of the national programme for the reform of the administration, adopted in April 2012, proved challenging.

Indicators of progress	*2013 assessments*
4.1. Increasing proportion of seats held by women in Parliament and in elected and appointed bodies at all levels	As in 2012, 32 per cent of National Assembly members, 46 per cent of Senate members, 35 per cent of ministers, 5.8 per cent of provincial governors and 32.5 per cent of communal administrators were female
4.2. Decreasing corruption in the public and private sectors	• According to Transparency International's East African Bribery Index 2013, Burundi moved from being the second least corrupt country in East Africa to the second most corrupt (index slightly decreased from 18.8 per cent in 2012 to 18.6 per cent in 2013) • In Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index, Burundi improved its ranking from 165th in 2012 to 157th out of 175 countries • The Anti-Corruption Brigade transmitted 247 complaints of corruption in 2013 to the Procureur général (156 in 2012) • The Anti-Corruption Court registered 205 cases in 2013 (285 in 2012). The Court delivered sentences for 169 cases in 2013 (218 in 2012)

4.3. Increasingly transparent, accountable and efficient national institutions	The Office of the Ombudsman received 131 complaints in 2013 (223 in 2012) and dealt with 140 cases (123 in 2012)
4.4. Progress made in the quality of public administration	The tax revenue collected by the Burundi Revenue Authority in 2013 was 599.2 billion Burundi francs (6.2 per cent increase compared with 2012)

V. Rule of law

Benchmark: An increasingly independent, accessible and credible justice system upholding human rights

Baseline through 2011: In 2011, the Ministry of Justice sectorial policy for the period 2011-2015 was developed, reaffirming the Government's commitment to strengthening the independence of the judiciary, enhancing good governance in the justice sector, making justice available to all and improving criminal justice. However, the document did not address reforms concerning the status of magistrates.

Developments in 2012: Implementation of the Ministry of Justice sectorial policy for the period 2011-2015 commenced in 2012. A national preparatory commission was set up to organize the National Conference on Justice (Etats généraux de la justice) while workshops were carried out throughout the country to collect the views of stakeholders on areas in need of reform. Following the implementation of a presidential pardon and release on parole, the total prison population decreased by 29.7 per cent in 2012. A draft code on judicial ethics was prepared but not adopted, and magistrates were not recruited through a competitive examination as required by law.

Indicators of progress	*2013 assessments*
5.1. Decreasing ratio of pretrial detainees to the overall prison population	The overall prison population increased by 15.78 per cent
5.2. Increasing proportion of law enforcement officials trained in rules of conduct concerning proportional use of force, arrest, interrogation, detention or punishment	65 military officers were trained as trainers on human rights and humanitarian law. Of those, 16 qualified as certified trainers and subsequently trained almost 2,000 members of the national defence forces and security forces
5.3. Increasingly simple and systematic access to the results of commissions of inquiry for those authorized	There was no commission of inquiry in 2013
5.4. Increasing number of criminals brought to justice	Data not available in 2013
5.5. Improving the management of prisons, to better comply with human rights standards	• Prison occupancy rate slightly increased from 183 per cent in 2012 (258 per cent in 2011) to 188 per cent in 2013 • 52 prison staff were trained in prison management

5.6. Progress made in the adoption and implementation of legislation on magistrates, in the professionalization of magistrates, as well as in the organization and effectiveness of the Supreme Council of Magistrates	• The draft code on judicial ethics was not adopted but instead transformed into a guide on judicial ethics • 196 more magistrates were trained on judicial ethics in 2013. As of 2013, all magistrates currently serving had been trained on judicial ethics
5.7. Progress made in the independence of the judiciary	• As in 2012, magistrates were still not recruited through a competitive examination as foreseen by law (the Government is citing budgetary constraints as the main reason) • The National Conference on Justice was held in August 2013, yet the recommendations guaranteeing the independence of the judiciary were not adopted
5.8. Increasing percentage of the population expressing confidence in the judicial system	Data not available in 2013

VI. Human rights

Benchmark: A deepening culture of protection and the promotion of human rights in Burundi

Baseline through 2011: The aftermath of the 2010 elections saw a marked increase in serious human rights violations, in many cases reportedly perpetrated by members of the security or national defence forces. In 2010, BNUB/the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights documented 40 cases of extrajudicial, arbitrary or summary executions and/or politically motivated killings; and 30 cases of torture (61 and 36 cases, respectively, in 2011). The establishment of the Independent National Commission on Human Rights in 2011 was an important step but concerns over case follow-up remained.

Developments in 2012: The human rights situation in 2012 was characterized by a significant decrease in the number of extrajudicial executions documented by BNUB (30 compared with 61 in 2011), of which only four were likely to have been politically motivated (about 20 in 2011). However, perpetrators in only 6 of the 30 cases were arrested and tried in a court of law, all resulting in convictions. The Independent National Commission on Human Rights opened three regional offices and investigated 480 cases, compared with only 107 in 2011.

Indicators of progress	*2013 assessments*
6.1. Increasing proportion of human rights violations — including cases of disappearances and extrajudicial killings — investigated by the judiciary, and perpetrators arrested, judged and/or serving sentences	• Of the 35 documented cases of extrajudicial executions in 2013, 27 are under investigation by the judiciary and 3 resulted in convictions

	• Of the 20 documented cases of torture in 2013, 14 are under investigation by the national police and the judiciary (6 investigated in 2012)
6.2. Increasing frequency and timeliness of reports submitted to the relevant bodies	One human rights report was submitted by the Government while two others were pending submission
6.3. Decreasing instances of torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment perpetrated by an agent of the State or any other person acting under Government authority or with its complicity	• BNUB documented 35 cases of extrajudicial executions (30 in 2012) • BNUB documented 20 cases of torture (16 in 2012) • BNUB documented 105 cases of ill-treatment (57 in 2012)
6.4. Increasing effectiveness of the Independent National Commission on Human Rights, including through the establishment of a monitoring network on human rights, by civil society organizations, which contributes to the activities of the Commission	• The Independent National Commission on Human Rights received 102 cases, investigated 84 and concluded 18 between January and July 2013 (between January and November 2012, the Commission investigated 480 cases and concluded 117) • The Independent National Commission on Human Rights was officially accredited "A" status by the International Coordinating Committee of National Human Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in May 2013
6.5. Rolling adoption of priority international and regional human rights instruments and increasing conformity of national human rights instruments with relevant international and regional instruments	In October 2013, Burundi acceded to the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment
6.6. Strengthening of structures dealing with the protection of vulnerable groups	• The law on the fight against sexual and gender-based violence was adopted in June 2013 • Magistrates of the Humura Centre were trained on the treatment of cases involving sexual and gender-based violence • No cases of refoulement were reported in 2013
6.7. Progress made in ensuring freedom of the media and civil society	Five cases of violations of freedom of the press were documented by BNUB in 2013 (none were documented in 2012)

VII. Regional integration

Benchmark: Deepening regional integration for Burundi with full participation in regional political, commercial and other negotiations and improved interaction of Burundian authorities with regional cooperation mechanisms

Baseline through 2011: After its accession to the East African Community in 2009, Burundi intensified its efforts to improve economic and political ties with regional partners in 2011. Regional integration is one of the eight pillars of the country's 2025 vision.

Developments in 2012: In 2012, Burundi increased its trade with East African Community member countries and actively participated in four important East African Community meetings. The drafting of a national strategy on regional integration was commenced but not completed.

Indicators of progress	*2013 assessments*
7.1. Increasing trade between Burundi and its regional partners	Data not available in 2013
7.2. Increasing political and commercial negotiations and interactions with member States of regional economic communities	• Burundi participated in seven high-level meetings of the East African Community, one of the Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries, two of the Economic Community of Central African States and three of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region • In the second half of 2013, several EAC summits were organized to which Burundi and Tanzania were not invited
7.3. Increasing capacity of the Government of Burundi to take forward the regional integration process	• The Ministry of External Affairs and International Cooperation, with BNUB support, organized several workshops, including on the reduction of non-tariff barriers; border security; defence, peace and security cooperation legal frameworks; and expediting the harmonization of Burundian laws with East African Community legislation • A study to assist the Service national de législation with the revision and drafting of a code governing companies and a code governing trade was supported by BNUB
7.4. Increasing perception of benefits from regional integration on the part of the population	Data not available in 2013

VIII. Social and economic development

Benchmark: Improving living standards of the population, delivery of basic services to the most vulnerable and conditions for economic recovery

Baseline through 2011: Despite the Government's efforts, Burundi suffered from widespread poverty, land scarcity combined with high population density, food insecurity, and high youth unemployment. Although Burundi's Human Development Index has constantly increased since 2000, the country still ranked 185th of 187 countries in 2011.

Developments in 2012: Burundi's socioeconomic challenges remained unchanged. Its Human Development Index increased from 0.316 in 2011 to 0.355 in 2012, moving the country from 185th place in 2011 to 172nd place (out of 186 countries) in 2012.

Indicators of progress	*2013 assessments*
8.1. Decreasing proportion of the population living on less than $1.25 per day	• The poverty rate was 67 per cent in 2006 (no new data available for 2013) • Burundi ranks last on the 2013 Global Hunger Index (same as in 2012)
8.2. Improving enrolment and completion ratios in primary education	• In 2010/11, primary school enrolment was 96 per cent (no new data available for 2013)
8.3. Decreasing number of internally displaced persons	78,860 conflict-affected internally displaced persons remain in Burundi and have been settled in 120 sites throughout the country, awaiting durable solutions
8.4. Increasing proportion of children aged 12-23 months immunized against contagious diseases	In 2010, 83 per cent of children were completely vaccinated (no new data available for 2013)
8.5. Increasing proportion of the population with access to potable water and electricity	In 2008, access to electricity was 4.8 per cent (no new data available for 2013)
8.6. Improving youth employment rate	• Youth unemployment is estimated to be very high (no concrete data available) • The Government, with the support of the International Fund for Agricultural Development, launched a new job creation programme in June 2013 designed to create about 20,000 jobs for youth in the period from 2013-2016
8.7. Increasing number of youth and women with access to basic social services	Data not available in 2013

8.8. Improving legislative and regulatory environment favouring business and investment	Burundi was ranked 140th of 189 countries in the World Bank's 2014 "ease of doing business index" (159th of 185 countries in 2013)
8.9. Improving socioeconomic situation of refugees, repatriated persons and internally displaced persons	• 1,000 shelters were built for returnees • Access to land and land disputes remain serious obstacles to reintegration processes
8.10. Increasing percentage of population feeling that the standard of living is rising	Data not available in 2013

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Letter dated 20 January 2014 from the Permanent Representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit herewith a copy of the principled proposals to the south Korean authorities made by the National Defense Commission of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) on 16 January 2014 with regard to inter-Korean relations (see annex).

As is already known, the respected Marshall Kim Jong Un, First Chairman of the National Defense Commission of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, has put forward the ways and means of improving the relations between the north and south of Korea, as well as defending peace and security on the Korean peninsula and in the region in his new year's address for 2014.

In this regard, the National Defense Commission of the DPRK, the supreme organ of the State in the DPRK, made the principled proposals to the south Korean authorities on 16 January 2014 upon authorization of the Government, political parties and organizations of the DPRK.

The principled proposals made by the National Defense Commission of the DPRK fully serve the purposes of improving inter-Korean relations, as well as of defending peace and security on the Korean peninsula and in the region.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) **Sin** Son Ho
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

14-21078 (E) 220114

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Annex to the letter dated 20 January 2014 from the Permanent Representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

National Defense Commission of DPRK advances crucial proposals to S. Korean authorities

Pyongyang, 16 January (Korean Central News Agency): The National Defense Commission of the DPRK made the following principled proposals to the south Korean authorities on Thursday, upon authorization of the Government, political parties and organizations of the DPRK:

It is the fourteenth year in the twenty-first century; amid the deepening bitterness the Koreans suffer from the national division.

As the times go by, the nation has suffered the ever-bigger pain of territorial division and national partition which were imposed at the hands of outsiders.

Out of the resolute determination to end this, the peerless patriot declared his iron will to bring earlier national reunification and peace and prosperity with his patriotic mind at a significant moment, when the first day of this year dawned, warming up the 3,000-ri territory and the minds of all Koreans and the people of the world.

But only the present authorities of south Korea have shown ill-boding movements from the outset of the new year, not doing away with the inveterate bad habit of escalating confrontation.

They build up public opinion to convince the people that the present stalemate in the north-south ties is due to the DPRK. They are saying this or that over the internal affairs of the other side and have become talkative about the non-existent "provocation" and "threat", not content with their dream of a sort of "emergency", deliberately straining the situation.

They are even calling for staging, from the end of February, aggressive "Key Resolve" and "Foal Eagle" joint military exercises, which they have waged every year under the pretext of "annual and defensive exercises" by resorting to the decade-old trite method.

The Ssangryong landing operation which is envisaged to be included in the war exercises is said to be held in the biggest scale, targeting an attack on Pyongyang.

The danger of the issue lies in that such military movements are being stealthily undertaken in south Korea and its vicinity by new naval and air forces, including huge tanks and armoured vehicles and airplane formations of the U.S. imperialist aggression forces.

Under the prevailing grave situation, the National Defense Commission of the DPRK makes the following proposals to the south Korean authorities upon authorization of the government, political parties and organizations of the DPRK:

We propose taking practical measures in hearty response to the warm call for creating an atmosphere for improving the north-south ties.

It is the invariable stand of the army and people of the DPRK to mend north-south ties and achieve national reconciliation and unity.

So we officially propose that the south Korean authorities take the practical measure of halting all acts of provoking and slandering the other side from 30 January, a day before the lunar new year's day.

This year is a significant year, marking the tenth anniversary of the "4 June agreement" in which the north and the south agreed to stop all forms of slander and psychological warfare in the spirit of the historic 15 June joint declaration.

If the south side respects this agreement it signed, there can never be any reason whatsoever for it not to accept our proposal.

If those in power have true intent for improving the north-south ties, they should take good control of what is uttered by them and lead the media to create an atmosphere favourable for improving the north-south ties and thus make the strong wind of reconciliation and unity rage across the Korean peninsula.

Now is the time to definitely end the evil cycle of slanders, calumnies and hostilities that are harmful to all. South Korea should no longer block the voices of the fellow countrymen calling for harmony of the nation.

We propose taking the practical step of halting all hostile military acts against the other side in response to this historic call for ensuring the security and peace of the nation.

Even minor and accidental conflict can immediately lead to an all-out war on the peninsula. This is a stark reality today.

Any war on this land will help big powers to fish in troubled waters and bring unimaginable destruction to Koreans.

So, we again propose immediately and unconditionally halting all military and hostile acts targeting the fellow countrymen in collusion with outsiders.

For the present, the south Korean authorities should take the crucial political decision of cancelling "Key Resolve" and "Foal Eagle" joint military exercises, which they plan to stage from the end of February under the pretext of "annual and defensive drills".

If "coordination" and "cooperation" with the U.S. are so precious and valuable, they had better hold the exercises in the secluded area or in the U.S. far away from the territorial land, sea and air of the Korean peninsula. This is the stand of the DPRK.

Explicitly speaking, the DPRK will never take military acts detrimental to the nation's security and peace by introducing outsiders in the future either, as in the past.

We especially propose stopping all acts provoking the other side on the ground and in the sea and air, including five islands in the West Sea, hotspots where both sides are in acute showdown, levelling their guns at each other.

The DPRK side will show its practical action first for the realization of this proposal.

We propose taking practical measures that will be beneficial to each other to prevent a nuclear holocaust from being inflicted on this land.

The denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula is a goal common to the nation. This is also the invariable will of the army and people of the DPRK.

The possession of nuclear weapons and the pursuance of the line on simultaneously pushing forward economic construction and build-up of a nuclear force are a treasured sword common to the nation and the most just option for self-defence, which aims at ending the nuclear threat and blackmail against all Koreans by the U.S. and envisages the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula and the rest of the world alike.

Our nuclear force serves as a means for deterring the U.S. from posing a nuclear threat. It will never be a means for blackmailing fellow countrymen and doing harm to them.

We courteously propose that the south side not resort to reckless acts of bringing dangerous nuclear strike means of the U.S. to south Korea and to areas around it, taking this occasion as an opportunity.

It is the stand of the DPRK to resolutely break with the double-dealing stand of tolerating the nuclear weapons of outsiders, which are harmful to fellow countrymen, while denying the nuclear weapons of fellow countrymen, which protect the nation.

These crucial proposals reflect the desire and wish of all Koreans to reject outsiders and bring earlier the independent reunification, peace and prosperity of the nation from the standpoint of By Our Nation Itself.

If these proposals are put into practice, it will be possible to settle all issues, big and small, arising in north-south relations, including the reunion of separated families and their relatives.

It is the unanimous wish of the army and people of the DPRK to open up a wide avenue for improving north-south relations by the concerted efforts of the Koreans.

We express the expectation that the south Korean authorities will respond positively to our principled crucial proposals.